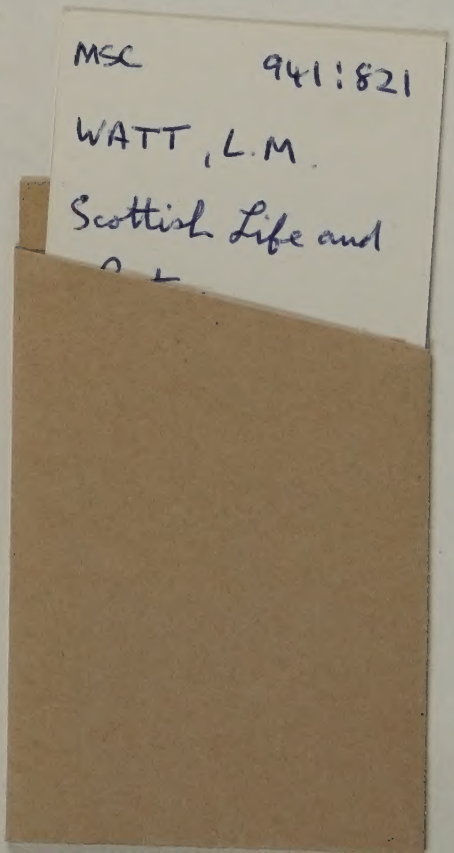
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SCOTTISH LIFE AND POETRY

BY

LAUCHLAN MACLEAN WATT
M.A., B.D., F.R.S.E., F.S.A.Scot.

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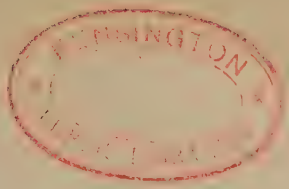


SCOTTISH LIFE AND POETRY

CHAPTER I

EARLY LIFE

Glimpses of the early life of the people may be had through consideration of their homes. Shelter from weather, security from foes, contiguity to fishing-grounds or beds of shell-fish, the existence of cover for the constant warfare on the forest monsters, the vicinity of quarries for weapons, guided the selection of the site of what not infrequently in far later days became perhaps a populous and important city.

The folks who lived so are the objects of wildest conjecture. We know what they lived on, and with what instruments they slew; but little more, except that they must have frequently endured wretched misery. The able hunter, or the strong man with a weapon, either fashioned by himself or wrung from the grip of some other, alone could reckon on being fit to secure the best shelter and the skins required for a measure of comfort and clothing. Yet they were not utterly brutes. From some of the caves have been recovered what were doubtless masterpieces of primitive art, giving us a glimpse of our tawny prehistoric hunter, in his smoky home, by the light of his flickering fire, scratching, on antlers and tusks of deer and mammoth elephant, figures of beasts of the chase, with lines of real beauty in them. These are proofs that even in Cimmerian darkness, light, beauty-seeking, had arisen for some. Life must have been a sort of sleepless grappling scuffle with the shadows of fear that inhabited low marsh and cavern, lake and forest, and, above all, with man's persistent enemies—disease and man himself, his fellow-creature and continual foe.

After the Iron Age had dawned many caves were enlarged and made more commodious. Teviotdale has excellent specimens of what would seem to have belonged to a community of tribes, who extended at one time over a district stretching from Midlothian right through the territory of the Teviot and the Jed.

Sea-caves were not so common for dwellings, as they could only have been safely used as such when the sea had withdrawn, and the beach-level modified its configuration.

The oldest forms of entirely artificial dwellings remaining in Scotland are, of course, identified with "the Picts," a convenient name for all the unknown who moved in the mists of unrecorded time, so that almost everything whose origin is folded in uncertainty used to be attributed to this mysterious race, and thus considered to have been at once fully explicated. These dwellings were both above and below ground. The former are better known, perhaps, as beehive huts. They were built of dry stone on a very primitive principle, suggested, doubtless, by the caves and pit-house or "weem," the stones overlapping till they met at the top. They are to be seen in the Arran Isles of Ireland, and one was discovered in Uist. Windowless and unchimneyed, they were simply artificial caves reared by men above the ground. The "weems," or earth-dwellings, were just the beehive process reversed in position, and are to be found widely scattered. The specimens at Kildrummy, in Aberdeenshire, and at Skaill in Orkney, are amongst the most notable anywhere. They were often explained as having been the remains of siege-works, but archæology has set them in their proper place amongst ancient dwelling-places of men. It must have been altogether a strange life, with many wild elements of weirdness.

Perhaps the most remarkable type of prehistoric home is that which is known as the crannog, or lake-dwelling. The idea of such dwellings was really an interpretation and adaptation of Nature's own example. It was evident to all that an immeasurably superior security was to be found on an insular position, and that for purposes of defence it was desirable, where necessary, even to create an island for such a purpose. Judging from results it would seem that this was done by setting adrift rafts of brushwood, and, when these stranded, by constructing a composite mass

of stones, beams, and logs. Stout piles were then driven in around the edge, and the spaces between these filled up securely; then, on this island-platform, a hut community clustered, secure from everything but the treachery which might one day disclose to a foe the windings of the connecting causeway, or the dreadful conflagration which man's mysterious servant, fire, might awaken, destroying all their work right down to the water's edge. That the latter was the fate of most of the crannogs is proved by their remains; and archæology has great reason to be thankful that it was so, for the inhabitants evidently left in scrambling haste, scattering their choicest properties as they fled. Those dwellings do not belong all to one period. They began in the age of stone, and lasted till the age of bronze. They are sharply divided, according to what has been found on their sites, into those of the stone and those of the bronze age.

There is a form of early dwelling which, like the crannog, is essentially a stronghold, and around which much mystery is enfolded; in fact, there is no ancient dwelling of which there are so many specimens, with, at the same time, so little known about them or the people who inhabited them. They are the round towers, or "brochs." There are, roughly, seventy-five in Shetland, seventy in Orkney, seventy-nine in Caithness, sixty in Sutherland, thirty-eight in Lewis and Harris, thirty in Skye, and two in Forfarshire, while Perth, Stirling, Midlothian, Selkirk, and Berwickshire have each a specimen. They differ among themselves only in position and in magnitude, but their plan and construction are the same, just as if one man had planted them at the same time. The general form and features are a broad-based circular edifice of considerable height, the outside walls sloping in towards a point half-way up to the top. In some the lower wall is solid for about eight to ten feet from the base, except for the door and entrance passage, in which there is often a guard-room. From the passage a rude stair within the wall ascends to the second stage; thence up to the summit the structure is simply a double-walled funnel, with chambers between the walls, and narrow stairs leading upwards. The inside wall encloses a courtyard open to the sky. There could never have been a roof, as the outside wall is windowless, the only lights being loopholes left between the stones, and

looking into the enclosure or courtyard which the encircling walls created. The door was probably a slab of stone, while the other entrances leading into the upper chambers were so constructed that a man would have to stoop in entering, so as to lay himself open to an awkward reception if his company were not desirable. The lintels are monster monoliths, making one wonder how the people who moved in these contracted chambers could have raised them to where they lie.

Perhaps no better design for security against primitive warfare ever was made. The broch was impervious to fire. It was too high to be rushed. The entrance passage often had another inner door, in the event of the outer being forced. It was almost impossible for this to happen, as the whole upper structure, being dry stone, was an arsenal of dreadful weapons, which had only to be pushed over by the defenders to annihilate any who were underneath, and, even were the enemy so far successful, they would find themselves at the bottom of a well, exposed to absolute extermination. The brochs were formerly much higher than now. In 1800, or so, Dun Carloway, in Lewis, was forty feet in height. Pennant, in 1776, says one of the Glenelg brochs was, in his time, thirty and a half feet high, and seven and a half feet had just been removed. By many of the brochs elsewhere you find ruins of later buildings and attached fortifications of a later date, but at Glenelg there are the remains and traces of five, practically within the same field, as if a community of chiefs had settled down together, or a sort of John o' Groats family, else there must have been continual bloodshed in that strath.

The best of the brochs is that of Mousa, in Shetland. It is about forty-five feet high, and has been higher. It is twice mentioned in the Sagas, and its rooms and courtyard have been touched by some romance. Egil Skalagrimson, the warrior poet Norseman, tells how Bjorn Brynulfson, fleeing from Norway with Thora Roald's daughter, was wrecked on Mousa, landed his cargo, and wintered in the broch, where he married her, and thereafter sailed to Iceland. Then the grim rooms hung with skins, and the slab floor strewn with rushes, were doubtless merry enough; while the courtyard glowed in the watch-fire's light, and the ruddy men of the sea drank, sang, or squabbled, with stories of the

daring deeds of Northmen in between. And, again, when Erl Erlend Ungi eloped with Margaret, the widow of Maddad, Earl of Athole, and was besieged in the broch by Earl Harald Maddadson, doubtless brave days made the old sad place resound once more. It is silent now for ever, dreaming, by the waters, of the long dead who reared it on the shore, and the wild bird that builds its nest within its crevices is the only thing of life it holds; but, if the stones could speak, much of the story of our beginnings would probably have to be re-written and re-told.

The relics found in these have been very varied. In the broch of Ousdale, near the Ord of Caithness, was found a cist covered with a slab, and containing ashes, charcoal, and clay. In cleaning out the chamber at the foot of the stair a human skeleton was discovered, buried head downward, built in, and covered with stones and earth. In the courtyard of the broch at Kintradwell a well seven feet deep was discovered, and on one of its steps lay a stone cup, as if just laid down yesterday from a lip long ages dust. It makes your heart stand still; and you can scarce forbear looking over your shoulder to see if some grim warrior, parched with thirst, be not behind you in the dark. This broch had remains of later inferior buildings around it, and, under these, ten skeletons were unearthed in exploration.

The relics found in these buildings reveal a stage of considerable civilisation. The people who lived in them kept flocks and herds, grew corn, and ground it with little hand-mills, spun and wove, had ornaments of gold, and worked in iron and bronze. All kinds of stone implements have been found, from mallets to cups, horn and bone combs, buttons and bodkins, not many instruments of bronze or iron, but pottery in plenty, and all kinds of food traces. The remains of Roman ornaments and denarii found at Scapa, in Orkney, point to nothing. Over four thousand of these denarii have been found in Scandinavia, evidently carried thither by Northmen themselves in later times.

It must have been a strange life, in peace or war. In the latter, the people around probably forsook their wattled huts, and crowded in to defend the broch; the long nights had song and saga to beguile them; and love and hate were there—many a sad heart throbbing behind the dry-stone walls, many a proud soul breaking after the fight was over;

or, when the mist, chilling and with the roar of the sea behind it, came up to the door of the tower, where some would wait in vain for the hearts that were drifting on the skerries. The Norseman swept them from the shores somehow, and took their places, and they left only scraps of their life for us to guess at, as a garment dropped in flight may tell those who find it that some one had passed that way before them.

But, squalid and hard though the lot of prehistoric man was in life, his death lifted him into a totally different plane. His dwelling-places were, when not rude cavern or stone hut, of the flimsiest nature; his comforts were nothing, yet, when he died, a place was set aside for him which, for grandeur of simplicity, eclipses everything of similar kind. He had, if noteworthy in any way, a chamber of huge slabs built for him. His ornaments — frequently trophies, doubtless — and his weapons were laid beside him, just as the Indians or other savages were wont to do. Often these were broken, in order that the spirit of them might be free to go with his spirit wheresoever he went. Then over this chamber of sleep earth and stones were heaped, till a conspicuous landmark was raised. Or a circle of huge rough monoliths was reared around him, with curious lintels of massive boulders here and there, to be left standing through earth's enquiring ages unexplained and unexplaining, or till as much as could easily be handled should be carried away to build dykes or byres for the farmer whose holding was on the corner of the moor where those lonely derelict columns brood to-day.

CHAPTER II

PEOPLE AND TONGUES

"To know ourselves" is best achieved by a study of the life and poetry of our people.

One must, however, be extremely careful of the entanglements caused by hasty conclusions, the frantic guess-work of ethnology, and confusing views of history; from which you find perpetuated to-day such statements as that such and such districts are Celtic because the people of them speak Gaelic, or Saxon because Gaelic is not understood there, usually, of course, at the date of the writer himself; whereas language has often little to do with race at all, after long lapse of time subsequent upon settlement. For example, you find in America thousands of negroes, English-speaking and following European habits of thought and living, whose boast of being Anglo-Saxon is a broad joke indeed. At the time of the siege of Mafeking, Baden-Powell was taken as the representative of Anglo-Saxon resolute doggedness, while his names mark him out distinctly as Cymric, and his race had learned that dogged pulse of frontier warfare, standing dourly in the mists, fighting in De-Wet-like campaigns against the English Edward. The fact is, that we are so mixed as a people that perhaps no greater historic fallacy has been perpetuated than the designation of us as the Anglo-Saxon race. Anglo-Celtic would be nearer the mark of truth, and, if we would be fully described, Anglo-Cymro-Dano-Celtic would most truly cover the Scot at any rate.

Dr Samuel Johnson said, "Languages are the pedigree of nations." Like many other aphoristic utterances, this is not true universally, and in Scotland it does not hold at all. "For not only is English spoken throughout the

Highlands by people to whose ancestors it was an alien tongue, but the Gaelic language itself is the mother-tongue of many whose physical characteristics plainly shew that they come of widely different stocks."[1] We have ourselves seen whole parishes undergo the change from one language to the other, and in places where, only a few years since, the children were playing in the one tongue the present generation are playing in the other. In 1830 Gaelic was the absolute vernacular of Braemar, while in 1876 it was preached in four Parish Churches in Caithness, and in seven congregations of the Free Church in that county. It does not follow that a race changes its history or its pedigree according to the uniform it dons.

The natives of the outer Hebrides are regularly spoken of and thought of as the purest Celts, " because Gaelic is their language " ; whereas the Highlander himself calls those islands *Innse Gall*, " the islands of the strangers," from the fact that they were largely peopled by the Norsemen, and held by Norway till after 1226. Recently an account of the life of George Ross, who founded a little kingdom of his own in the Cocos Islands, in the Indian Ocean, appeared in a newspaper. He was born in Orkney, so to the writer of the article he must be " the Viking," " the child of the Norseman," and the like ; a thing which no Ross could ever be, for his race could not be anything other than that of the Celtic clan of his name, and he must have been sprung from some settler in the Islands, a thing easily explained, Orkney and Shetland having been in historic times the happy hunting grounds of Scots adventurers, as the melancholy traditions of the native people still can testify, and the lingering dislike of the " Scotchman " among the older generation proves. So, also, a friend of mine, writing about a district from which Gaelic had died out about two generations ago, the people now speaking a broad strong Doric, said : " Their speech proves them to be of the old Teutonic stock," which it might also have done in regard to the children of the Italian ice-cream vendor in any Scottish village, or the children of a Polish miner " with a name like a sneeze," but a vocabulary and accent picked up in the parish school !

The Scots are a mixed race, but the predominant trend of thought and sympathy is Celtic, in the main. The masterful

[1] Mackenzie's *Short History of the Highlands.*

Scandinavian seized, held, and dominated districts of the land. Yet, though he changed much of the local situation, he did not change the blood of the folk. He gave to the kerns whom he conquered his own name as the tribal title, as did the Macleods, the Macaulays, Sinclairs, and their set, but inside the clan thus formed there were sept names and clanlets who kept and keep still their own stories and their own designations. The great clans were most frequently strong co-operative confederacies, rather than a homogeneous unity sprung from a common source.

It is important and useful to consider the poetry of Scotland, its characteristics and its history, if by any means we can arrive at a glimpse of ourselves as a people.

There is a literature of song and legend in the northern land which was there before the Saxon and the Norman came. Gaelic was the language of the Court until Malcolm Canmore's Saxon Queen, in the eleventh century, put it out of fashion; although John Macdonald, known as "Iain Lom," was pensioned by Charles II. as the first and last Gaelic Poet-Laureate in Scotland. He was bard of the Keppoch Macdonalds, and lived through the reigns of Charles I., Charles II., James, the stirring times of the Revolution, and the reign of William and Mary, dying in 1710, when Anne sat upon the throne.

There was, even after Saxon language and poetry had become the fashion at Court, a solemn national recognition of the Celtic origin of the nation. Thus, at the coronation of the Kings before Alexander III. it was a part of the ceremony that, as the monarch was set upon the mystic Stone of Destiny, a Gaelic bard stood forward, and, in the ancient tongue, recited the genealogy by virtue of which the new king had right to rule. As the old language faded from the low country before the spread of the Saxon tongue, the minstrels would have to wed new words to the time-old strains. The gift, however, remained with the Celtic wanderer. In the books of the Lord High Treasurer of James IV., as preserved in the General Register House of Edinburgh, we find records of payments for music and ballads to "Martyn Clareschaw." Martyn appears again as "Martyn M'Bretne" just after "Blind Hary," both having sung at the King's command in 1491. In March 1498, at Dumbarton, just within the misty Highland line,

"the man that playit to the King on the clarsha" received fourteen shillings. The "clareschaw" here is the old Highland harp, the real national instrument, superseded in later days by the warlike bagpipe.

"Irish" was the adjective used to describe the Gaelic people and their language in Scotland as late as the eighteenth century. The Scottish people themselves, however, did not call their native Gaelic "Irish" until the fifteenth century. "Lingua Scotica" was the designation. Reginald of Durham, writing in 1164, described Kirkcudbright as being in the "terra Pictorum," and speaks of the language of the people there as "sermo Pictorum." George Buchanan, writing about Galloway in his *History*, in the time of Queen Mary, tells us that a great part of the people of that country used their ancestral speech, up even to his day. Dunbar, in his famous *Flyting with Kennedy*, taunts his opponent as "Ersche Katherene," or Irish robber. The word, as applied to Scottish Gaelic, was undoubtedly intended to convey depreciation, and its use survived till a very late period, instances occurring frequently in the edicts of the General Assembly, though there, of course, without any such meaning. This is responsible for many errors, as when, for example, an ignorant Irish enthusiast claims Highland melodies as belonging to his country, because in the eighteenth century they were described as "Irish," meaning, of course, "Gaelic" in popular phrase. Kennedy, replying to Dunbar, says, as if it were natural, owing to racial difference :

> "Thou luvis nane Erische, elf, I undirstand,
> Bot it sowld be all trew Scottismennis leid ; language
> It wes the gud langage of this land."

Thus, as late as the sixteenth century in Pictish Galloway the language of the people was known to be Celtic.

Lyndsay, in his argument against Latin being exclusively considered the sacred tongue, points out that it was quite clear that the Scriptures should be translated into Latin, owing to concomitant circumstances of environment :

> "Had Sanct Jerome been borne intil Argyle,
> Into Irische toung his bukes had done compyle."

Barbour, Dunbar, Blind Harry, and Fordun show that they

take the true Scottish vernacular to be the Gaelic tongue. Thus Barbour writes :

"This wes the spek he maid, perfay ;
And is in Inglis toung to say."

Blind Harry, also, in his *Wallace*, says :

"Lykely he was, manlik of contenance,
Lyke to the Scottis be mekill gouernance,
except Saiff off his toung, for Ingliss had he nane."

Dunbar, speaking of Chaucer, styles him

"Of our Inglisch all the lycht."

Fordun, in the *Scotichronicon*, mentions that in Scotland there are two tongues, namely :

"Scottish and Tuetonic. The tribes speaking the latter language inhabit the sea-coasts and the lowlands; but those who speak the Scottish inhabit the mountains and the remoter islands."

Wytoun deliberately makes the statement as to the language in which he thinks he is writing :

"Allsua set I myne intent,
My wyt, my wyll, and myne talent,
Fra that I sene had stories sere
In cronnyklys quhare thai wryttyne were,
Thare matere in-tyl fowrme to drawe
Off Latyne in-tyl Ynglis sawe." diction

Thus he follows the usage of Gaeldom, where, till this day, even the most Doric song of Burns is spoken of as an "English" song.

It is not a little remarkable, however, that when Alexander, the last of the purely Celtic dynasty died, the popular lament for him was in Scoto-English or lowland Scottish :

"Quhen Alysandyr oure kyng was dede,
That Scotland led in luue and le, love and law
Away wes sons off ale and brede, plenty
Off wyne and wax, off gamyn and gle :
Oure gold wes changyd into lede,
Cryst borne into Vyrgynyte
Succoure Scotland and remede,
That stad is in perplexyte."

The aggression of Teutonic culture along the eastern territories north of the line of the "Scots" meant conflict, and was the real cause of such a terrible slaughter as took place at Harlaw, which is not to be taken so much as a struggle between Celt and Saxon as between the old régime and the new. After the wars of independence a sense of Scottish nationalism came into the land; the deepening hate for "the auld enemie" made the people later on in the sixteenth century take and claim the name "Scot," which they had hitherto applied to the dwellers of the mountain territory, and the word "Scottish" as being the vernacular of the southern and Teutonic districts, and no longer that of the Gael, which now was styled "Ersche" or "Irish," with, as we have seen, an accompaniment of scorn by those whose language had become that of the Norman-Scottish Court. The difference of language became in this way, though wrongly, equivalent in popular judgment to a distinction of race. What this signified may be seen in *The Flyting* of Dunbar and Kennedy, where everything that can be cast into the form of a sneer on this account is flung in the teeth of the western bard.

About 1450 the language of the Scottish writers is known for critical purposes as Early Scots: from 1450 to 1620, it is known as Middle Scots. The influential elements which brought about the changes thus denoted cannot be exhaustively noted, as it is impossible to sift and weigh the individual contributions of Scandinavian and Norman elements. It was a slow movement, the ebb and flow marks of which were not definitely recorded. The early Middle Scots was leavened by the influence of Chaucer; it was the medium of James I., Henryson, and Dunbar, and their school, and was an artificial literary creation, whose aim was to enrich and elevate the language with "aureat terms." It by no means represented the actual vernacular of the people. The direction of progress was, however, towards the popular tongue, and Lyndsay, especially, was probably the pioneer in this. In his works, with very few exceptions, the vocabulary was such as every person could understand, perhaps only too clearly. This was the secret of his power in his own day, and certainly gave him that hold upon the Scottish people which did not slacken till the great vernacular revival in Robert Burns.

In Scotland from a very early period we find the poet's craft a recognised and honoured one, and we see men of culture writing cultured verse in cultured form, so far as their time permitted them—a literature, in fact, of the Court, as well as a literature of the populace—word-music and word-picture of the hall, stories of world-renowned heroes, as well as the rude, heart-shaking lays of the peasants' huts, full of rough foray and fray in local envies, and the hates of rival clans. Sometimes an odd fragment of the poet's scorn sticks and stings in the enemy's heart. In 1296 Edward of England attempted, with strenuous bitterness of onslaught, to take Berwick, but the Scots drove back the foe and burned some of his ships. And then they flung from town to town shafts of scornful song, a verse of which is preserved in Fabyan's *Chronicle*:

"What wenys Kynge Edwarde with longe shankys
To have wonne Berwyk all our onthankys? in spite of us
Gaas pykes him, let us
And when he hath it
Gaas dykeis him."

After the noble manifestation of national liberty at Bannockburn in 1314, the same voice spoke, as in the scrap preserved in the *Chronicle of St Alban's*, and in Marlowe's *Edward the Second*:

"Maydens of Englande, sore may ye morne
lovers For your lemmans ye haue loste at Bannockysborne,
With heue a lowe.
What, weneth the kynge of Englande
So soone to haue wonne Scotlande?
With rumbylow."

Such songs were sung with accompaniment of dances

"in carolles of ye maydens and minstrellys of Scotlande to the reproofe and dysdane of Englyshmen."

These verses, rude as though they had been chopped out with a hatchet on an oak-tree, possess a natural verve, which gives them the power of eye-witness.

The curt lines which have come down from the time of the marriage, in 1328, of David II. to Princess Joanna "Makepeace," sister of Edward III., give a clear-cut summary

of the opinion of the prudent Scots regarding the extravagance of the Englishmen.

> "Long berdys, hartles,
> Paynted hoodyes, witles,
> Gay cotis, graceless,
> Maketh England thryftless."

There is in these things the directness of personal contact, and the very human loud-mouthed laugh of a stern nationality's scorn.

The Scots were not quite the unlettered people they are so often thought. For example, the first great English poet, Geoffrey Chaucer, had finished his *Canterbury Tales* in 1383, but the first great classical Scottish poet, Archdeacon Barbour of Aberdeen, completed his poem *The Brus* in 1377. Now, almost immediately thereafter, the muse of England fell asleep, not to be really stirred in its slumber until the influence of Italy, through Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, awoke it nearly two hundred years later. Yet in that interval Scotland had produced several very distinguished poets, in King James I., Robert Henryson of Dunfermline, William Dunbar, Gawain Douglas—who gave the first impulse to classical learning in Scotland—and Sir David Lyndsay of the Mount. Not alone, however, singers of high degree, who wrote book-songs and told at length in cultured verse the doughty deeds of old, but a vast body of wandering minstrels from an early period kept Scotland stirred by song. With their harps across their shoulder and their bardic character familiarly recognised by the people, the whole land was free to their passing to and fro. The High Treasurer's books of the reign of James IV. show how fond the King was of their stories and their song. With little imagination one can easily portray the "broken-bakket fitular of Sanct Andris" who got nine shillings, "Bennet the fythelar," "Mylstom the harpare," John "the harpar with the ane hand," or the "crukit vicar of Dumfries" that sung to the King in Lochmaben, besides Highland harpers and tale-reciters all over the country north and south. The harp made open doors everywhere.

The minstrels were the forerunners of the poets of Scotland, sowing in wild and lonely places what grew into gardens of song in hearts long after them. An old writer described them in Latin as men of mirth, skilled in the harp and in

stories of ancient times. They supplied, in fact, the place of the public library, the popular theatre, and concert-room of to-day. Later on they were not fully approved of, as when, in the Statutes of Iona, in 1609, they were rigorously condemned for encouraging idleness, and by their adulatory verse increasing the already overweening vanity of the chiefs at whose table they fed. Yet, so long as man loved to be stirred by chant or moved by romantic verse, the whole land lay before the bards. No castle gate resisted them, and hearts were opened to their magic, stirred to deepest patriotic fervour, or swayed into tears by the tales that swept along to the accompaniment of pulsing chords. They had stories of old-world glamour, aglow with the flush of chivalry, that made men and women devoted to their race, their country, and their clan. I question but these nameless singers tuned the heart of the people to liberty, and gave them brave things to think of and to remember, when the shadow of tyranny lay across Scottish fields.

It seems to have been a custom in Scotland as old as the time of Alexander III., that when the King went through the land he was received at the various towns and burghs by minstrels and singers. When David, the son of Bruce, married the Princess Joanna of England, both Scottish and English minstrels sang and played at the wedding, and the latter accompanied the Royal pair as far as Dunbar.

Scotland was, in truth, amid all its poverty, a land of song. And it was not at all a matter of marvel that it should be so. For the ingredients were there.

The Celt, the Dane, the Saxon, and the Norman brought with them each his store of superstition of the sea, and the hill, and the night's dark terrors. They peopled every glen and cave, every crag and stream with a host of imaginary creatures; while the headlands and dales were already sacred as scenes of wild conflict and places where their dead were sleeping, slain in the grappling struggle for a footing on the soil. The words and the dying wishes of these, lingering in popular memory, played pathetic melodies upon sympathetic hearts.

"Bury me," said the Princess who faded and died in the West, "Bury me up on the hilltop, that I may know, if I wake, I can look across the seas to Norway and feel the winds of Norway stirring the heather around my cairn."

"A brave man dies but once," says Sweyne; "let him die bravely." So the people sat by the shores, watching the breaking waves, or by their fires in nights of storm, or cowered in their tossing boats in tumbling seas, telling stories, chanting tunes and cronans which kept alive the longings and sayings of those whose graves were in the glens, or up amid the silence of the hillsides; and thus the beginnings of a literature moved, in the darkness, into being.

So also, having a footing secured, they builded their eyries on the edge of dizzy crags above the sea. Inland and over the waters they swept with oar and with steel, till they crushed to subjection or attracted, for shelter and succour against other sea-hawks of the creek, a band of retainers In their daring and in their conflict their lives were dramas, and the lives of those that were beneath their hand often tragedies, but in both were found beauty, pathos, and devotion. Think how the feelings were trained through such experiences, and you have the secret of the cry of song which moved the heart of a people blended of races like these, and you will understand the power of the love that possessed them for ballad and story quivering with passion of battle, or melting with love and sorrow!

No land has had in history greater extremes of fortune and misfortune. The good old times, which we are always sighing for, knew this very well, when the baron sat in his castle, while the miserable vassals lay in their wattled huts or were shivering at the masters' doorways, like dogs waiting for a bone. Further, perhaps in no other country has there been manifested more variety of race; the Pict, whatever he was—for no man truly knows, and he himself has left practically no statement; the Gael, with a heart of flame, an environment of imagination, devotion and courage, yet tripped up by ill-fortune in every crisis of his history; the Dane, bringing frugality and caution; and the Norseman, with the boldness of the salt seas he had sailed in, and the brine-sodden caves he had slept in, going half-mad when the fumes of the mead were in his brain—a first-rate fighting man. It is vain to take any part of Scotland, as some do, and divide it out as inhabited, almost from the beginning of the contact of these races, by any one of them in single purity. The Roman did not make much impression after all; yet he occupied some districts for almost four hundred

years. He left traces of his presence in his camps and walls, and altars to forgotten gods. The Hebrides were as Norse as Norway from the tenth century, but the Celtic wives, whom the warriors wedded, conquered them, till they forgot their race and their tongue and became Gaelic of the Gaels after the battle of Largs.

It is this variety in unity of character which makes Scottish history so enthralling in its passion and activity. Without this you would not have the romance that floats about the fairy world, the glamour of ancient knighthood, the spell of "Douglas tender and true," the charm of the Stewart dynasty. The mixture of the blood kindles imaginativeness, and makes a man do unexpected things. The nature of the son of a mixed race like this, is like lava. You never know how dangerous it is to put your foot upon it, even when it seems cold, whether it will bear your trampling on it or precipitate you right through into flame.

As for the land, it is as varied as its climate. From flat sandy shores, over which curl the creeping tides crawling outwards to the sea, returning quicker than a man can gallop, on to the wild highland lochs, caged in steep defiles, and the craggy mountains that frown above black waters hissing in the tidal race; from the flat carse lands golden with grain to the desolate uplands "greeting all winter, girning all summer"; from the villages with the laughter of children and the hum of the school, the clack of the mill, and the tinkling of the smithy, away to the solitudes, where the shepherds' wives watch from the door to see the bairns come home; from quiet loch to tempest-riven estuary; there surely is not another land with more variety of texture. It is, of course, this very peculiarity that has enabled us to keep it as our own dear land. Even the Roman found his limit. Cohorts that had marched from end to end of Europe, trampling kingdoms under foot, paused at the mountain walls, and won no further. The Dane or the Norseman managed to secure a footing on the flat places, and on the crag's edge he hung his castle like the eagle's nest; but, like the wild cats of the mountain, the primitive dwellers of it still fought for their own. Though they were slain in hundreds, yet they struggled in the misty passes, till the invaders had to be content to hold what they had gripped. Out of this struggle for possession of what was their own emerged that

love of thinking for themselves, and that hunger for liberty, which are distinctively marks of the Scottish people. In Scottish poetry, religion and patriotism go together.

The great thing in Scottish life was the struggle for independence. The Scottish people were in this matter perhaps the earliest who looked upon a kingdom in its right interpretation—namely, not as a thing to be thrown away in a gamble, as being the mere private property of a king, to be sold or pledged for his personal necessities. Kings looked upon it as meaning that, thinking little of the spiritual claims of the people upon their own country. The Scottish king, to escape a lengthened imprisonment, had to swear fealty to England, pledging his kingdom. But the Scottish people said: "We are not thereby bound. Nor is our land, so dear to us, and loved like life, to be tost away without our will." The sentiment became a flame all-consuming. It lit the lowlands, it ran afar among the glens, it crowned the mountain peaks with lambent wonder, till it led a nation in arms, invincible in its resolution, to conquer or die for liberty.

The tragedy of Sir William Wallace, betrayed and slain, deepened and intensified the national feeling. The terrible thing about it is the treachery, selfishness, and jealousy of the Scottish nobles, their meanness as a whole, though all the more clearly against the gloomy background shine the loyal fealty of the Douglas and the devotion of the common people. Then, when the face that knew no fear, and the brave hands were fixed on English spikes to be bleached in the wind and rain of heaven, it was seen what a bield had been the Wallace for his land. And there was nothing for it but the wilds again, the scabbardless sword, and battle to the death, for freedom and a name of our own!

It was against a huge tyranny that Bruce led his hosts at last to Bannockburn's ridge—against a terrible scheme, nothing less than the destruction of a nation. The enterprise unified all parties. Men from the isles and clansmen from the mountains fought side by side with their hereditary foemen of the plains, for liberty. That gave the dominant note for our poets. There was a chord that sang of freedom almost by itself, without touch of minstrel's finger, added then to the Scottish harp.

The poetry of such a people as the Scottish must combine many elements, each in a way distinct, yet blended together

into a single creation. And it would seem that the heart of Caledonia has five telling and original chords. The first and earliest, the music which thrilled wondrously hut and hall, gentle and common, was the Romantic. The next that was added to the instrument was the Patriotic. Then followed the chords of Love, Humour, and Nature—five simple chords. They were not all, of course, struck by the passions of any one poet at the same time ; but yet great passion and pathos have welled out from all of them at sundry times and in divers manners.

They followed each other in natural order. For poetry is the interpretation of things, and so, first of all, has a story to tell. The poet's mind is an enquiring and inquisitive one. He looks on setting suns and melancholy moons, the transformations of the world's drifting times, the sorrows and joys, the struggle and defeat of men and races. These touch the mysterious sense whereby he differs from others, and they become clothed in glamour which makes the very story of them touch all listening, sympathetic hearts. Story is the first utterance of song. The first lyric must have been but a cry from the heart of the poet's gladness or grief ; and the first story that caught men was told by a poet. We can think of him anywhere ; down by the sea, telling his listeners what makes the waters ebb and flow, what makes them glimmer and sigh under the misty moons, where the winds and waves have their birth, and what lands of mystery brood away beyond the flood ; or in the caves of hunters among the hills, holding the weary from their sleeping in the glow of the fires of resinous branches, telling of the ghosts and the elves and the shadows, till the very smoke seemed gibbering things of fear, and the stars were like wondering eyes above the darkness. The heart of man has always seasons when it is not sufficient for itself. That makes the poet's hour secure, and fills the sorrow of the individual with the sorrows of the world's breaking hearts, gives to the heart an echo of its desire, masters by the subtlest of all subtle spells the poverty, passion, or distress that knock for entrance to the soul.

Naturally, therefore, Scottish poetry opens with romance ; the heart begins to string its harp with the thrilling chord of story :

> "Fables
> That Clerkis had in olden tyme,
> And other poets put to rhyme."

They were ingrained into the life and memory of the nation, and the man who knew them well had the secret of the mastery of men in his keeping. Archdeacon Barbour illustrates this faculty in his account of how King Robert the Bruce, in his famous retreat with two hundred men at the close of the year 1306, had to cross Loch Lomond. Sir James Douglas found a little sunken boat, fit only to take three at a time, and for a night and day they plied to and fro in this slow fashion. The restless feverishness of his exhausted followers may be easily imagined, but the King overcame their impatience by reciting to them portions of old romances dealing with the Court of Charlemagne. The King seemed always able to draw upon such resources when in difficulties, telling his people frequently of ancient heroes and men of olden time who won out of as great distresses as he was in. That some of these old stories were in writing and valued, is seen from the last will and testament of Sir James Douglas in 1390, where he mentions "All my books, both of the laws of Scotland and romantic tales."

Such were the earliest materials from which sprang our Scottish poetry.

CHAPTER III

THE GAEL

It must be remembered that in Scotland and in Scottish hearts beyond the narrow seas there were a life and poesy which was overlooked because they breathed a language not esteemed by the broad-spoken men of the plains. Patrick and Columba are outstanding personalities, the one Scottish born, though his work was done outside the limit of his native land, the other an Irish Gael whose work was, however, mainly Scottish. They were mystics in whose world the Unseen was almost tangible, while they were at the same time the most practical of men.

Patrick, the Scotsman who won Ireland to Christian civilisation, was a man who was schooled in hardship and in toil. If ever a man got hold of life out of "peril, toil, and pain," it was this man, who crossed the western seas and laboured, preached, and sang, till he ploughed all Ireland with the Cross, and made its blackened wastes grow green for Christ. His memory, like a barnacled rock which has stood amid age-long drift of waves and winds, has become encrusted with tradition and miraculous legendary story. But we have, altogether apart from these, his record of his life, written warm and throbbingly out of his heart. The manuscript of his *Confession*, almost eleven hundred years old, takes us back to his own day, for the scribe writes in it : *c.* 372-463.

"Thus far the book which Patrick wrote with his own hand. . . . On the seventeenth day of March was Patrick translated to the heavens."

It is a pathetic story. His father was a Roman Christian,

and had a farm near Bonaven Taberniæ, identified with Old Kilpatrick, near Dumbarton. Brought up in an environment of religion and order, he seemed yet to be careless of admonition, and treated religion slightingly. One must remember how strong, as yet, was heathenism, and how the air around was charged with unbelief and superstition of the older times. Besides, the light which had been kindled at Whithorn by St Ninian was now but dimly flickering, and there seemed a near risk of the return of the Druids to their groves, or of the many gods of the Romans conquering the domain that had been claimed for the Christian faith. But one day, while Patrick and his young companions were at play upon the shore, some strange ships, holding closely together, entered the Firth and quietly drew to land unnoticed. Then, with savage laugh and cry, a host of pirates out of Ireland leapt ashore, captured the startled youths, and, ere the villagers could rally for defence, had swept the best of the manhood and the women into captivity, and sailed away, leaving behind them the defenceless and the aged, wearily lamenting.

Such raids on quiet coasts were not uncommon in those early days, when the world, in sailing seasons, lay before the dark-browed raiders for a spoil. So, over the darkening waters, speeding with sail and oar, the pirates fled. Down behind them dropped the great lone rock, so dear to the stricken captives; and the familiar hills, which most of them should see no more, were left to the sorrowing night. When they arrived in Ireland the slave-market awaited them, and Patrick was sold by his captors to a heathen chief to herd cattle and swine in the mountains of Antrim. Six dreary years, in mists and rain and snow, a slave's life, like a dog's life, was his. Misery of body and of soul moved with him on the mountains.

He tells us that sleep forsook him. When he lay down weary in his comfortless sheiling on the hills he could find no rest. Night after night he looked into the limitless spaces, till the fountain of prayer within his soul was moved. The sleeping voice awoke, and his grief found voice in cries that sought God through the dark afar. Visions and visitations drew near to him, and voices spoke out of the invisible. In a dream he saw the Deliverer, wounded in hand and foot,

and with the red scar for the world's sorrows in His side; and He spake, saying unto Patrick,

"Fear not. These wounds I bear are thine. Thy heart has won its pardon."

The hills and the hard task became now no longer painful, lonely, and sad, for he tells us that often he rose and went out through the night, up into the hills, and sang praise to Him who had spoken to his soul when all else was silent.

Again in a dream a voice spake to him:

"'Tis well; thou shalt return to thine own country. Thy ship is at the haven waiting for thee."

So with only the hunger of native land for guide within him, he arose and fled towards the sea. It was a long flight, by many a trackless solitude and through many a place of fear; but ever, as he saw the sun arise, he knew that towards the door of morning was his homeward way. At length there lay the shining channel, and the ship of his dream just getting ready to sail. What wonder that the sailors mocked this rough figure running out of his hardships, scarred with the wind and the frost of the desolate hills!

Where they sailed to, or what befell them no man knows. For twenty-one years utter oblivion holds her curtain drawn across his story. Only once it lifts, when some terrible privations in some land of fear have put them into desperate straits, and the heathen captain turns with scorn to Patrick and asks: "Well, now, Christian, where is thy God?" But Patrick knew. He was still shaping His vessel in the hard-hammering school of trial for the difficult and arduous work of the years that were to be.

At last out of the unknown he found the old loved shores, and saw the hills that never had been out of his heart's remembrance rise before him. And, at the threshold, like him of old, the love of a father unforgetting welcomed him home as from the dead.

But there, as he wandered by the waves, the West began her pleadings with his soul. He thought of the sorrows of those afar, the slaves in their shelterless vigils, and the hard masters, who not yet knew Christ. And, in sleep, his day-dreams crept into his heart, and he saw one come towards him with a book whose opening words were "The voice of

the Irish." When he laid it aside he heard one say, in tones which reminded him of those "who were near the wood of Foclut, which is nigh the Western Sea," crying, "Come, we pray thee, and henceforth walk with us,"

> "Come to us, comrade, soon,
> And walk evermore by the wave-washed shore
> Where the lapping waters croon."

And he who had been like a boulder lying deep in the mire felt that he was to be a stone in the upbuilding for God.

Each day was full of hunger. Poverty, slavery, or death were ever near. But fear was always far away. And having lived the life whose flame lit others, and sung the love of God and trust in Him in song which, by faithful hearts who were strengthened by it, was carried over Ireland till the darkness passed, and the contending strifes were stilled, his strong heart fell asleep—and he lies waiting the awakening at Downpatrick.

His great hymn, worthily remembered, is called *The Deer's Cry*. It was celebrated as a prayer for protection among the Gaels. In the old hymns and prayers of the West you find echoes of it continually. It has been called "a corslet of faith."

> "For strength I bind this day
> Myself to the holy Three . . .
> To the angels and the holy ones
> Before God's face that be.
> And the strong great Christ who yet shall come,
> To judgment calling me. . . .
>
> "I appeal to the light of the sun,
> To the brightness of the snow,
> To the splendour of fire, the lightning's speed,
> And the winds through heaven that go,—
> To the strength of the world, and the things unseen
> Where the tides of the deep sea flow.
>
> "I bind myself this day to God to pilot me,
> His might to uphold me,
> His love to enfold me,
> His eye for me to see . . .
> His hand to guard me,
> His shield to ward me
> Where sin's dark shadow broods—
> Against all wiles
> And aught that defiles,
> Alone or in multitudes.

"Be Christ in all
Whate'er befall,
With me, before me, around me, within;
In every heart that seeks of me,
In every soul that speaks of me,
In all the souls that hear me,
In all that may endear me,
In every land,
On every hand,
Till Christ Himself I win."

Columba, though of Irish birth, was the father of Scottish literature and the pioneer of Scottish education. He stands on the border-limit between Christian and Pagan influences, a strong but kindly figure in the dark. 521-597. His race was royal, and he was naturally a leader of men. He was tall, grey-eyed, joyful, and radiant, yet endowed with the scorn of scorns, stern, and when need was, with the brave power of battle in him.

Born at Garten, in Donegal, in the year 521, he was a Christian from his birth. The wave of Patrick's gospel-tide had swept about his feet. He founded the monasteries of Derry and Durrow. But, when forty years of age, he figured in the battle of Cooldrevna and had to leave his native shores. That bloody strife sprang from two causes. Finnian of Moville was his master, and had brought a Psalter from Rome, said to have been transcribed from the second version of the Vulgate of Jerome. Columba, the pupil, a lover of books and poems, sat up three nights and copied it. But Finnian claimed the copy, and referred the quarrel over it to King Diarmid at Tara, for settlement. The King had probably never a question of literary copyright previously before him, but he fell back on a mother-wit interpretation of ancient law, and gave as his decision: "To every cow her calf, and to every book its copy." To this decision Columba could not bow.

This was trying enough to a man like Columba; but more was yet to come. The son of the King of Connaught had taken sanctuary with Columba, but King Diarmid dragged him out and slew him. Stirred by Columba, the northern princes rose along with the men of Connaught, and marched against King Diarmid, who was defeated in the stubborn fight of Cooldrevna, where three thousand men were slain.

Two years later Columba was sailing away, an exile, out

of Ireland, accompanied by twelve faithful comrades of the Cross. It is said that he was banished because of the bloodshed he had provoked, sent forth by St Molaise to seek as many souls in conversion to Christ as he had caused to be lost in that dark day of strife. It cost him great sorrow to leave Ireland, as this song of his, torn out of his heart, reveals :

"How swift is my coracle sailing,
Leaving Derry behind on the lee !
To the land of the ravens, dark Alba,
Ah ! sad is my errand to me.
I look back with sorrow to Erin,
With good-bye to her women and men ;
And my eyes are all misty with weeping,
For I never shall see them again."

Many a time since then has the same wail risen from the Gaelic heart, over the seas sailing, afar from home !

His doom was that he should not land on any place from which he could behold his dearly beloved Ireland. On Oransay they went ashore, but lo ! when they climbed the hill, down on the western verge still lay the blue line of home. So once more they moved along, till they stepped out upon Iona, which was to be one of the holiest islands in the world. He received a grant of it from the King of Dalriada, confirmed by King Brude. It was in the year 563 that this light-bearer came into gloomy Scotland—a land, then, where chaos dwelt, formless, void, torn by battling feuds and cruelties, where the women fought side by side with the men like screaming furies in the fray — a land, wild, dark, and waste, with superstition walking blindly over all.

For thirty-four years he tended the fires of civilisation, and the little island of the west became the lamp of Scotland. He was a lover of books, reading, writing, thinking continually. He faced kings; he shook slavery and tyranny to the dust; he moved everywhere kindling hope and liberty. He only laid his pen aside to die. He was writing a copy of the Psalter when he felt death's touch upon his shoulder. "I am done," said he, "Baitene can finish it."

He wrote a *Book of Hymns*, and is credited with three hundred books.

But sweeter than all to him was the tender memory of home. His heart never ceased to look across the waters, singingly.

"Happy he who hears in Durrow
Songs ascending, heavenward seeking,
And the wind among the oak trees
As a harper sweeps his string.

"And the glad notes of the blackbird,
And the lowing of the cattle,
And the cooing of the cuckoo
At the opening door of Spring."

In the Royal Irish Academy is preserved his Psalter, called the *Cathrach* or Battler, because a battle was fought over it. It was long considered a powerful helper in fights. It used to be carried thrice round the army on the breast of a priest, and if he were free from mortal sin it ensured the victory. It was taken abroad by one O'Donnel, who was exiled through the Stewart Rising, but in 1802 it was recovered and brought back. The beautiful casket in which it had been reverently preserved was opened. Inside was found a decayed wooden box, and therein lay a mass of vellum, stuck together and hardened into a solid lump. Skilfully and carefully leaf was separated from leaf, and it was found to be a Psalter bearing evidence of hasty writing—fifty-eight leaves, from Psalm xxxi. to Psalm cvi. From its text and character there is little doubt that it may be the very book for which so long ago three thousand warriors gave their lives away. In Oxford is preserved in a manuscript all the verses attributed to him, though it was said that he wrote one hundred and fifty noble songs and hymns. They breathe his deep piety, his warm appreciation of Nature, and his love of home.

"Were the wage of Scotland given me
From the centre of the sea,
One wee house in distant Derry
Would be dearer far to me.

"Sweet the groves of oaks, and often
Did its quiet my heart control;
Ah! the angels oft-times yonder
Whispered wonder to my soul."

In the crash of thunder and the terror of the lightning's flame one of his best poems was composed in prayer to God.

"Before Thy face the angels fall,
And heaven's loud swelling anthems cease;
Move where the rolling thunders call
And fold about their anger peace.

"So 'mong my thundering passions move,
Oh, make my heart Thy dwelling-place;
So be the casket of Thy love
Worthy that jewel of Thy grace."

Again:

"We praise Thee, God, the Three in One,
The Father, Spirit, Christ the Son;
We change and fade and pass away,
But Thine is the eternal day,
Around Thee all earth's ages run,
But still the same,
Thy deathless name,
Thy love Divine, Thou Three in One."

The elegy of the bards upon him spoke truly what he was, not alone to his own, but to all ages. He was to them and to the world

"Their souls' light . . . God's messenger dispelling fear from them . . . learned, chaste, charitable . . . physician of the heart of every age . . . a shelter to the naked, a consolation to the poor . . . There went not from the world one who was more continual for a remembrance of the cross."

Columba was the creator of a new literature as well as of a renaissance in religion. The former he accomplished by his reformation of the bardic class, and the institution of a scholarly community. The bards had become a nuisance in Ireland, and it had been decided that they should be banished, as sorners whose demands had to be complied with else the unfortunate person who refused was immortalised in pungent satire, which made him walk as with a blistered face before his fellows. Columba, however, crossed over to the great Convention of Drumceat in 590, and succeeded in carrying a resolution whereby the number of the bards was reduced, but their position recognised by the State, they being placed in the status of public instructors —the bardic colleges, as distinguished from the ecclesias-

tical colleges, becoming schools of poetry, law, and history. Their *Ode of Thanksgiving*, composed by their chief Dallan Forgail, is contained in the *Leabhar na h-Uidhre*. Under Columba's sheltering influence, the monasteries became centres of learning, where the youth of the Pictish tribes were trained. It may be taken as the truth that no Pictish boy anywhere learned anything except from a monk of the Columban school. Men came from the Continent to drink of this stream, while from lone Iona in the western waves professors went to Cologne, Louvaine, and Paris. As Professor Donald MacKinnon has stated,

"We have not yet fully realised the part which the school of Iona had in shaping the destinies of the Scottish nation."

Columba's great successor in this respect was John Knox, a thousand years later.

Zeuss has pointed out the debt which Europe owes to the Celtic poets of this period for the invention of rhyme, which took the place of alliteration. It was not till perhaps five hundred years after Columba that rhyme began to appear in English Literature, which had followed its Germanic ancestry in the alliterative beat with which it marked its phrases ; but long before that, both in Gaelic and in Latin, the Celt not only had his lines ending with musical clang, but had invented intricate internal laws of word-music, enriching the composition of verse.

It is astonishing and humbling to think how the old books of our land lie far away from Scotland. Carried all over the world, at the girdle or above the heart of wandering Gaelic monks, they were left in the great continental monasteries where these died. And thus the very oldest book that was written in Scotland is lying at Schaffhausen in Switzerland to-day. It is surely one of the most interesting antiquities of Scotland. It is Celtic, because it was written by a Gael, but it is not written in the Celtic tongue. It is Latin, with the Gaelic thumb-mark on its page. There is a gulf of a hundred years between it and the next oldest Scottish book. It is a copy of the *Life of Columba*, as written by Adamnan, who was contemporary with the saint, and it has been decided that its date is some time before the year 713 A.D. The style of its handwriting is earlier than that of the *Book of Armagh*, which has been fixed at the year 807.

The corrections which seem to have been made upon it at a later date have been decided by Keller to belong to a time within the first twenty years of the ninth century. The scribe, following the habit of the period, puts his name in at the close, beseeching the reader,

"Pray to the Lord for me, Dorbene, that after death I may possess eternal life."

A monk of this name died at Iona in the year 713, before he took up the office of abbot, to which he had been elected in that year, Adamnan having passed away only nine years previously. What wanderings this manuscript has seen, what adventures it has been carried through, what thunderous revolutions have shaken Europe around it, no man can tell. Its original was written about 693 by Adamnan, the ninth abbot of Iona. He lived within the century after the death of the great Columba himself, and had been in touch with those who had looked upon the face of the saint, and whose hearts still trembled with the majesty and power of his activities.

This copy of Dorbene was probably carried to Germany about the beginning of the ninth century, when the terror of the irruptions of the fierce Norsemen into the Western Islands set a stream of Scottish pilgrims drifting towards the Continent. First taken to the Monastery of St Gall on the Rhine, it became submerged in oblivion till, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, Stephen White, an Irishman, searching the Continent for Gaelic documents, discovered it and transcribed it. Again it disappeared until it was re-discovered in 1845 by Dr Keller of Zurich, lying at the bottom of a book-chest in the town library of Schaffhausen. It was finally published by Dr Reeves in 1856, and re-issued in 1874, with an English translation. There is an opportunity for a Scottish millionaire to win back to his native land this sore-buffeted and long-wandered child.

Though, like his great master, Adamnan interested himself actively in the life of his race and of the people amongst whom he lived, his name abides in the memory of men chiefly through his record of the great saint of Iona. It is not wonderful that, by the time he wrote, simple acts and words of the Celtic apostle had become magnified into miracles, portents, and prophecies. Nevertheless, through

all these a very human and very notable man is seen and heard.

There are, of course, other copies of this great *Life* besides the Schaffhausen one scattered through Europe. In the British Museum, in Austria, in Bavaria, in Dublin, in Munich, in St Gall, and in Belgium, there are manuscripts of it extending from the twelfth to the fifteenth century.

Adamnan was not unlike some people of later times in despising their own language as compared with those of other nations, for he apologises for writing Gaelic names in " the base Scotic tongue." The fact, however, that he wrote in Latin undoubtedly, of course, secured the preservation of the book.

In 1861, through the labours of Dr Skene, the author of *Celtic Scotland*, a small collection of tattered Celtic manuscripts was brought together and deposited in the Advocates' Library.

James Macpherson, of Ossian fame, in his perambulations through the Highlands and the islands, had been entrusted with several old writings, which, though placed in the hands of his London publishers, did not awaken the interest that was anticipated. Some of these passed into the hands of the Highland Society, and thence to Skene's collection. Other manuscripts came from the collection of Major Maclachlan of Kilbride. Of collections of Gaelic poetry made at different times and in different places, the fates and fortunes have been as varied as their contents. The famous one which was gathered in Strathglass before the " Forty-five " served as fire-kindling material in the Roman Catholic college at Douay. The manuscripts of the Macvurichs, who were seanachies and bards of Clanranald for seventeen generations, fell, many of them, to be cut up into tailors' measures.

From the point of view of the consideration of Scottish life and poetry, one of the most interesting of these old reliques is the *Book of the Dean of Lismore*, compiled evidently by Sir James Macgregor, Dean of Lismore, and his brother Duncan, in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. It has three hundred and eleven quarto pages, and is written in phonetic Gaelic, a fact which gives great value to it as an instrument of comparison with the spoken language of the present time, while, in a literary point of view, it is priceless, as presenting undeniable specimens of Celtic verse of an early

period. With the exception of the few Gaelic phrases in the *Book of Deer*, it is the oldest work of Gaelic writing, containing matter even of the fourteenth century, and answering sufficiently the "ipse dixit" of Dr Johnson, who, without knowing a single word of the language he despised, said:

"The Erse never was a written language. There is not in the world an Erse manuscript a hundred years old."

At the very time he spoke, the Dean's book was an incontrovertible witness of more than two hundred years' standing. It contains specimens of over sixty poets, with eleven thousand lines of Gaelic verse, culled from the whole Highlands, from Caithness down to the south-most limit, with dialogues between Ossian and Patrick, which Macpherson had ignored, probably because he considered them to be later interpolations, or not sober enough in phrase and manner to suit the romantic expectations of his awaiting patrons. It is one of the most catholic of books in regard to the origin of its writings. One of the authors is Duncan Mor O'Daly, Abbot of Boyle in 1244; another is the Knight of Glenorchy, who was slain at Flodden. Some are by the Earl of Argyle, while many of them are by those whose names are quite forgotten.

Other collections are *The Fernaig Manuscript*, and especially the *Book of Clanranald*, which was received by Macpherson from Neil Macvurich the bard, who traced his descent from Muireach Albanach, one of the poets of the *Dean of Lismore's Book*. Besides Ossianic fragments, it has various scraps of verse, genealogy, history, and miscellanea. Much remains yet to be done in the work of presenting these to the world.[1]

The great manifestation of interest in Gaelic poetry which was awakened in the eighteenth century by the work of James Macpherson, a Badenoch man, has not, so far as a final settlement is concerned, reached its limit. Macpherson undoubtedly was in contact with true Ossianic and other remains of Gaelic verse, but made the signal error of attempting to weave these fragments together into a continuous epic. Had he contented himself with presenting in its genuine form such tales as *Deirdre and the Sons of Uisneach* he would not have been overwhelmed in the haze of suspicion through which

[1] *See* Cameron's *Reliquiæ Celticæ*.

he moves. Nevertheless, it has been distinctly proved that many parts of his *Ossian* are as genuine as any writings in the world. Even lowland poets were familiar with the names of the Ossianic cycle, though it was their fashion to sneer at the Celt, simply because they could not understand his language.[1] The literary world of the period was dominated by Samuel Johnson, who could be one of the most swash-buckling tyrants that earth ever knew. His critical view was obscured and warped by his overmastering scorn of Scotland and Scotsmen, and he allowed his personal prejudice to render him purblind in the matter. Daring though his journey was into the Hebrides in quest of Celtic remains, it was, of course, entirely futile, seeing that he knew not a syllable of the language of the literature which he condemned. Even to-day one finds a similar method, as when, in recent times, a writer sneered at Macpherson as having had to learn Gaelic in order to bolster up his fraud! One thing is absolutely certain, and it is this, that whatever Macpherson's methods may have been, no Badenoch man in the eighteenth century needed to learn Gaelic, for that language until to-day is the vernacular of the district.

The influence of Ossian brought into the modern poetry of Europe the spell, glamour, and witchery of vast spaces, and the expression of the presence of Nature, the spirit that is in the woods, mountains, and fields, and that speaks to the heart of man with unfathomable intensity, in far-stretching solitudes by the sea.

Dr. Young, Bishop of Clonfert, made various collections of native Gaelic poetry in his own country, and he said:

"Mr Macpherson is by many supposed to be the sole and original author of the compositions which he hath published as translations of the works of Ossian; this charge I am enabled to refute at least in part, having fortunately met with the originals of some of them. Mr Macpherson, I acknowledge, has taken great liberties with them; retrenching, adding, and altering as he judged proper."

This was confirmed by the Report of the Committee of the Highland Society, which enquired into the nature and authenticity of the works of Ossian, in Edinburgh, in 1805. That committee discovered many corroborations of parts of

[1] *See* pp. 105, 114, 186.

Macpherson's work, but acknowledged his editorial scheme and his habit of interpolating in order to adapt the ancient reliques to modern ears.

Still in many places linger some forms of life and poetry in fragmentary residue of ancient simple faith.

In far-off Harris you find the sweet croon of slumber-time making a lowly cottage bedside holy :

"Christ with me lying down,
Christ with me waking,
Christ with me, watching me,
Every night and day.
God with me protecting,
The Lord with me directing,
The Spirit with me, strengthening me,
Ever and aye."

Or, again, is it not as if the shadow of the saints breathed through the open door above the Atlantic wave in the sweet Gaelic prayer :

"Jesus, Son of Mary,
Mercy show to me ;
In the morning and the evening
Let Thy presence with me be.
When the dawning drives the darkness
And the pain of night away,
And when sorrow wakes within us
At the darkening of the day."

One old Gaelic hymn of patience comes to us from a woman stricken with leprosy in the west. It is like a voice out of the years, helping the weary to wait and be strong :

"I will trust in Jesus,
He will me renew ;
For the withered tree is freshened
With His kindly dew.

"Sad my heart—yet shall I
Stay my song to sing,
When the birds in gladness
Praise Him on the wing?"

Think what help to simple souls has come from these words breathed in weary hearts ! Or when the cottage door is left behind, and the wide world claims the Gael, so often unreturning, what power to the heart that is saying

the long good-bye, is in such a hymn of blessing and prayer as this :

"Travelling moorland, travelling townland,
Travelling mossland long and wide,
Be the Shepherd, Christ of mercy,
Walking with thee by thy side.
Where thou movest may He be,
Keep and guard thee,
Watch and ward thee,
Till thou turnest home to me."

Simple hymns are these which broke from simple, trusting hearts. All that makes men love home and the place where the loved are sleeping, and the beauty of the true life are in those hymns, which are parts of the highest things though they be in the language of the folks behind the hills, and whispered, Godwards, not in the great cathedrals, but in lowly homes that look across dim western seas afar.[1]

[1] *See* Carmichael's *Carmina Gadelica*.

CHAPTER IV

THOMAS THE RHYMER AND SIR TRISTREM

The ancient romantic poem of *Sir Tristrem* was attributed by Sir Walter Scott to Thomas the Rhymer, when he edited it in 1804. It, of course, deals with the cycle of King Arthur. We are apt to associate the romance of that King only with English and Welsh writers. The story was, however, a common one, as a stock-piece of minstrels and troubadours. It was a topic of legendary interest in Scottish hearts until the big patriotic figures of Wallace and Bruce, and the good Sir James Douglas, with the momentous issues and details of their struggles for national liberty, outshadowed and outshone its characters.

Sir Tristrem was a notable knight of Arthur's cycle, and his story was one of the great romances at the Anglo-Norman Court. He was sent to Ireland to bring home his uncle's bride, Isonde, or Iseult, but the accidental drinking of a love-philtre by the way involved them in an intrigue which dominated their lives. The poem is in most cultured form, with all artifices of accomplished verse, but evidently exists only in English transcripts — a fact sometimes explained by the tradition that Edward I. of England destroyed all the Scottish manuscripts he could secure. A strong body of argument against "True Thomas's" authorship of *Sir Tristrem* has arisen, as the romance is known to have existed in several languages before the time of the Scottish poet; but it never was asserted that he originated the story. The figures stand out in it as living men and women, in a gallery of living deeds, with human joys and griefs, tangled together by human love.

The legends of King Arthur and his Court were the property of Cymric races in Cumbria and Strathclyde before

these were conquered by Edmund, the Saxon King of Wessex, and then ceded by him to the Gaelic King, Malcolm of Scots, in 946. The Cymric and Saxon races were much intermingled through the Borders and Cumberland, and the story of the Celtic Arthur floated on, generation after generation, through the hearts of the people. The tales grew in time to be the embodiment of the Celtic struggle which centred round the shadow of Arthur, who was a real king—one of the last Celtic chiefs of Britain. The poets, in their verse, gave the Celt the victory which fate denied their race in the hard fact of many a bloody conflict. The Arthur of legend quells the Saxons, pacifies the Celts, and establishes a reign of peace upon earth. He was a sort of Messiah of the Celtic race. A theme like this, coming across the soul of a poet, like a wave on a rock, was bound to break in music.

Of the origin of the story no real knowledge exists. Amongst the oldest pieces of Welsh literature are the Triads, and the name of Trystan ab Tallwch occurs in these. It probably had its source in Wales or Cornwall, and thence passed over to Southern Europe. The earliest version of the Romance is found in some scraps of French verse in manuscript of the thirteenth century. In these the authorship is ascribed to " one Thomas," without further identification. These fragments are deeply interesting from the fact that there is no doubt the original from which they sprang was the ground-work of the Old High German and Old Norman and Scottish versions.

The tale was introduced into the literature of Germany by Eilhard of Oberge, a great poet whose verse walks on sentimental stilts. Nevertheless, his version was the parent of others, and passed on into the Slavonic tongue of Bohemia.

Godfrey of Strassburg, the Minnesinger, who lived on the borderland of the thirteenth century, gave new life and beauty to the poem. Nature, love, passion, sorrow, moved through his utterance. It was certainly not a thing that could be run through at one sitting, for it consists of 19,573 rhyming couplets—nine thousand lines longer than *Paradise Lost*! There is no saying to what extent the poem might have gone on, had not death cut short the poet's labours.

Ulrich of Thuringen and Henry of Freiburg, however, took up the continuation of the Romance in the thirteenth century. The old story had become a Scandinavian Saga,

translated into the Norse language in 1226. This was afterwards rendered into Icelandic prose, which turned its back upon the original story whenever it chose, and walked its own way of adventure.

Towards the close of the thirteenth century this world-wanderer was brought into Scotland. For about two hundred years people seemed to have tired of it, but Tristrem's name kept on appearing in French songs and romances. Gower, in his *Confessio Amantis*, uses the story as a text for his moralisings. Then, in the fifteenth century, it stepped out once more in the book of prose tales, which, printed in Rouen in 1649, moved into Germany, Italy, Spain, Denmark, with all kinds of new attachments, Isolde becoming, at last, the daughter of the great Mogul, the Emperor of India! The tale becomes a bit of the Round Table episodes, dominated by the name of Arthur, and thrilling with the romance of that King's Court.

The French version passed into the English of Sir Thomas Malory, and in 1445 emerged from Caxton's printing press as part of the *Morte Arthur*. The laughter of Cervantes caused obscurity to sink over the story.

German modern poets have written on the old theme, but the greatest German rendering, to-day, of the tale is Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*. Matthew Arnold, Tennyson, and Swinburne, have all dealt with forms of the story, according to their own methods. The passion of the old tale found a special place in the work of the last-named.

The Scottish version is taken from the Auchinleck manuscript in the Advocates' Library. The illuminated letter at the beginning of the poem has been cut out, with the result that certain lines have been lost. The first line, however, has been preserved on the preceding page as a catch-word, so that it reads:

> "I was at Ertheldoun,
> With tomas spak y thare."

The poem was edited by Sir Walter Scott, but modern critical methods had not touched him, and his version is full of errors. He was perfectly clear in his statement that it was written by Thomas the Rhymer. Much controversy has, however, waged round this assertion. The language in which the poem is written is such as was used about the end

of the thirteenth century in the north of England and the south of Scotland. Thomas is four times mentioned in the work, including the reference in the first line. Robert of Brunne, who died about 1338, says :

"Sir Tristrem,
Ouer gestes it hes the steem,
Ouer all that is or was,
If men it sayd as made Thomas.
Bot I here it no man so say,
That of som copple som is away.
So thayre fayre saying here beforne,
Is thare trauayle nere forlorne.
Thai sayd it for pride and nobleye,
That non were suylk as thei
And alle that thai wild ouerwhere,
Alle that ilk wille now forfare.
Thai sayd in so quainte Inglis,
That manyone wate not what it is : knew
Therfore heuyed wele the more
In strange ryme to trauayle sore,
And my witte was oure thynne,
So strange speche to trauayle in,
And forsoth I couth noght knew
So strange Inglis as thai wroght ;
And men besoght me many a tyme,
To turne it bot in light ryme."

The discussion in regard to the authorship centres round the hypotheses that the Thomas who is quoted in the French and German poems had written one of the French versions of the story, probably before 1200 ; that the *Sir Tristrem* which we know was probably derived from a Norman or Anglo-Norman source ; that the author of it may have used earlier efforts of Thomas of Ercildoun. Others, however, assert that the transcriber of the Auchinleck manuscript, finding mention of some bard called Thomas, inserted in his version an identification of that person with the Thomas best known to himself, namely, Thomas of Ercildoun. But Robert de Brunne's words hardly demonstrate that Thomas of Ercildoun had written the poem. Certainly it is clear that the name of the Rhymer was, by use and wont, linked up and associated with the work itself.

Apart, however, from the legends of Arthur's Court, the earliest poetry in Scots is associated with the romantic name of Thomas Learmonth, of Ercildoun, or Earlston, in

Berwickshire, called, in the happy way Scottish people had of nickname-giving, Thomas the Rhymer, or Thomas Rymour, indeed, much more known by that title than by his proper family name. Vague and mysterious figure though he is—like a shadow walking in the borderland between realms of fairy and realms of truth—he yet was a historical fact. In a deed by Patrick Haig, of Bemersyde, undated, in the Chartulary of Montrose, he appears as a witness; and in a document in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, of date 1299, "Thomas de Erceldoun, son and heir of Thomas Rymour of Erceldoun," conveys his family lands to the Church of Holy Trinity at Soutra, thus giving a hazy clue to the date of his death.[1]
In the wall of the Earlston churchyard is a slab rudely inscribed:

"Auld Rymer's race
Lies in this place."

Further, his prophecies were considered notable from early times, and we find Barbour writing in the year 1370:

"I hop Thomas prophesy
Of Hersildoun sall weryfyd be
In him for swa our Lord help me
I haiff gret hop he sall be King
And haiff this land in leding."

The old grey ruin, west of Earlston, which tradition identifies as the place of his abode, still, after eight hundred long changeful years, bears his name as "The Rymour's Tower," and one seems to hear the wind sighing his own melancholy prophecy through the crumbling walls:

"The hare shall kittle on my hearthstane,
And there never will be a laird Learmonth again."

He stands a dim shape in the moorland, in the dawn of Scottish vernacular poetry, transfigured by popular fancy and tradition as a prophet; yea, more than a prophet, as a hero of supernatural elfin adventure and intrigue, alongside of Michael Scot and Merlin. He was known far and wide, spoken of by the troubadours of France, and in the superstitious traditions of Gaelic fairy lore. His figure is clothed with the shadows of his time—a dark time, ignorant and

[1] Omnibus has literas visuris vel audituris Thomas de Ercildoun filius et heres Thomae Rymour de Erceldoun.

unlettered, when his superior gifts could only be explained as endowments won through contact and intercourse with the spirit-world of fairyland. A man evidently of deep wisdom, thoughtful and apart, high above the level of men around him, shrewdly sensible of the past and the future of his country, his long and lonely wanderings in solitary places, shunned by the foot of the peasant for fear of the spirits and shadows of dread with which popular superstition peopled them, marked him off as one to whom the other world was an open kingdom from the wells of which he drank knowledge and power. In a very ancient manuscript he tells us :

> "Allone in longynge als I laye,
> Undyre-nethe a semely tree,
> I was war of a lady gay,
> Come rydyng owyr a fayre le."

This was the Queen of Fairyland, and she led him in at the Eildon tree, and dark and dreary was the way.

> "it was dirke als mydnyght myrke,
> And euer the water tille his knee . . .
> The montenans of dayes three
> He herd bot swoghynge of the flode."

For three long years he lived away in the mystic land, though it seemed to him but "dayes three." But at length the time came round in the spirit world when the cess of a life was due to hell, and, lest Satan should seize "true Thomas,"

> "Scho broghte hym agyne to Eldone tree,
> Undir-nethe that grenewode spraye,
> In Huntlee bankes es mery to bee,
> Whare fowles synges bothe nyght and daye."

And here she bids farewell to the poet :

> "Fferre owtt in yone mountane graye. . . .
> Ffare wele, Thomas ; I wend my waye ;"

At parting she revealed to him a long roll of prophecies, and gave him the gift of true fore-knowledge. He returned to his tower above the Leader ; but still always with the chance of recall to the land he had left, like a chain at his feet. So one day, when friends were feasting with him, a message was brought that a hind and a hart were wandering in the

village street, and he knew the sign. He rose and followed the strange visitants, and no more for ever entered over his threshold again. Yet often was he to be met, like the phantom of comely knight, on the moorlands that he had loved, with messages sometimes of future mystery for the souls of those who asked him, seeking knowledge.

He must have been a strong and great character, for he impressed his own time, and his influence grew, as only the influence of such a man could, till, within seven or eight years after his death or disappearance, he was in wide repute as a prophet. It was the vogue to refer all kinds of prophecies back to his authorship. The results of battles were considered to come under the guidance of his foretelling power, and his wisdom was esteemed infallible. Thus Wyntoun says :

"Of this fycht quilim spak Thomas — formerly
Of Ersyldoune that sayd in derne — in mystic phrase
Then suld meit stalwarthy starke and sterne.
He sayd it in his prophesy
But how he wist it was ferly." — strange wonder

There was uncertainty among the common people as to the origin of his gift. Blind Harry, who, with his usual disregard for chronology, introduces Thomas the Rhymer into the scenes of the life of Wallace, says :

"The people deemed of wit he meikle can
And so he told so that they bless or ban
In rule of war, whether they tint or wan
Which happened soothe in many divers case,
I cannot say by wrong or righteousness."

This reputation saved him for all time, when, perhaps, had he trusted to the remembrance of posterity only through the influence of his romantic version of the story of *Sir Tristrem*, his would have been the lot of many another, lingering on among the crowd of shadows, only a name, nothing more. He was, undoubtedly, a true poet with a wakening sense of the power and beauty of external Nature, especially with an intuition of the dreamy and weird—the green hillside, the grey, solitary, stretching moorland, and the silent glen. His soul responded, too, to the awakening spring, the joy of the birds, and all that could be won from lingering and watchfully listening among the lonely hills, communing with the life of Nature.

The prophecies ascribed to him are quaint and striking. One of the best-known examples of his oracular methods is that whereby he predicted the death of King Alexander. He declared to the Earl of March that on the morrow a great wind of disaster would blow over Scotland. But the morrow was so calm and still that the Earl sent for the prophet to laugh at him, when tidings came of the King's death at Kinghorn. "Yon is the sorrowful sough I spoke of," said Thomas, and, looking into each other's faces, men understood how true had been his words!

There are two well-known rhymes of his bearing on the union of the Crowns:

> "A French Queen shall bear a son,
> Shall rule all Britain to the sea,
> He from the Bruce's blood shall come,
> As near as to the ninth degree."

which, of course, met its fulfilment in James VI., the son of Mary, Queen of Scots. This prophecy was much in the minds of the people at the time of the union of the Crowns, *Birrel's Diary* telling us how, in Scotland, all that had reading and understanding were daily speaking and expounding the prophecies of Thomas the Rhymer and other prophecies which were prophesied "in auld times."

This idea of his advent having been foretold must have been an admirable instrument of flattery to James VI., and was readily taken advantage of by the Court sycophants and poets—Sir William Alexander and Drummond of Hawthornden weaving it into verse for the delectation of His Majesty.

Again the other says:

> "When Tweed and Pausayl meet at Merlin's grave,
> Scotland and England shall one Monarch have."

The grave of this Merlin, who was a Scottish seer of the sixth century, is at Drummelzier, Tweeddale, and on the east side of the graveyard the burn Pausayl falls into the Tweed. Tradition tells that on the day of James VI.'s coronation the waters of Tweed did overflow and joined the Pausayl at the prophet's grave.

The influence of Thomas the Rhymer as a prophet of disaster has left its imprint far and wide. In Aberdeenshire some remarkable rhymes of his remain.

Fyvie Castle is one of the most beautiful and romantic of the many old castles of that fine county, but it sits above the Ythan, under the shadow of the Rhymer's curse :

"Fyvie, Fyvie, thou's ne'er thrive ye,
As lang's in thee there's stanis three ;
There's ane intil the highest tower,
There's ane intil the ladye's bower,
There's ane aneath the water yett,
And thir three stanis ye'se never get ! "

It is said that the first two have been found, but the one under the gate leading to the Ythan has evaded all search. Beyond doubt, the curse has been remarkably corroborated. No luck has followed Fyvie. The shuddering memory of the spell was sadly re-awakened when the only son of the present proprietor, Lord Leith of Fyvie, was killed in South Africa, and the words seemed again to sigh on the winds around Fyvie—heirless and sad !

The other bears reference to a curious alluvial mound at Inverurie called the Bass, and is a very musical bit of cadence :

"The Dee and Don shall run in one,
And Tweed shall run in Tay,
And the bonnie water o' Urie
Shall bear the Bass away."

The editor of the "Chandos Classics" volume of ballads, with lack of local knowledge, takes this to be the Bass Rock in the Forth !

Again, he is said to have sat on a stone near Inverugie, and, looking on the stronghold of the Earls Marischal, to have cried :

"Ugie, Ugie, by the sea,
Lordless shall thy lands be,
And underneath thy hearthstane
The tod shall bring her bairns hame."

The stone on which he sat was built into the church, and the prophecy became realised in the disasters of the Keith family consequent upon the Jacobite rising in 1715.

He even enters weirdly into a witchcraft trial in Aberdeen in 1598, when, among the charges against Andrew Mann, was that he knew, in the company of the Queen of Elfland and the Devil, sundry dead men, and that the King who died at Flodden, and Thomas Rymour, were there !

How the influence of his name was carried so far from Earlston is not known, unless by wandering minstrels and story-mongers. I sometimes wonder if his disappearance might not be associated with some political necessity which drove him off into the lone lands behind the hills. Or are his bones lying in some quag till Judgment Day?

A quaint but grim scrap, of which there is a variant, has a gaunt descriptiveness about it of a remarkable kind:

"Quo' the Tweed to the Till,
'What gars ye gang sae still?'
Quo' the Till to the Tweed,
'Though ye rin wi' speed,
And I rin slaw,
For ilka ane that ye droon,
I droon twa.'"

The gurgle of the waters is almost living in the old lines—the wind in the reeds and the beat of the ripples on the stone by the shore. This was a favourite rhyme of the later Wizard of the Borderland, Sir Walter himself, to whom the memory of True Thomas was very dear.

CHAPTER V

BARBOUR AND BLIND HARRY

ROMANCE is the father of history, and patriotism drinks brave draughts at the stream of national story. It is therefore perfectly natural that the singers of patriotism should follow close upon the heels of the singers of romance; and the first of note who strung a nobly-sounding chord upon the Scottish harp was a grave ecclesiastic.

John Barbour was his name. Born in the north, probably only two years after Bannockburn, he felt the impulse of freedom throbbing underneath his foot, and, with a devotion almost akin to worship, he sang in heroic verse, through fourteen thousand lines, the glory, bravery, and regal majesty of the Bruce.

The exact time and place of his birth and education have not been discovered. He was a Northerner, and he died on 13th March 1396, probably about eighty years old.

Dr Jamieson argued, from the position which he held, by 1357, in the church, that Barbour must have been born about 1316 in order to have reached his preferment by the age of forty. We know, however, by the Gregorian Decretals that he could have been made Archdeacon at the age of twenty-five, though it is unlikely that he should have attained that dignity at the earliest possible moment.

His appearances on the authentic page of history are clearly recorded. He received a safe conduct, dated 13th August 1357, from the English king, for himself and three students on their way to Oxford for purposes of study. Scotland was at the time, of course, without any university of her own. In the document he is styled "Archdeacon of Aberdeen." The application was made at the request of "David de Bruys," the Scottish king, at the time captive

in England. On 13th December 1357 he was appointed one of the Commissioners to meet in Edinburgh for consideration of the ranson of King David II., after that King's captivity, consequent on his capture at Neville's Cross in 1346. Seven years later we see him again going over the Border with four horsemen for a similar purpose; next year he is on his way "to St Denis and other sacred places," evidently on a religious pilgrimage, while in 1368 he passes again into France to study. In 1347 he appears as one of the Auditors of the Exchequer; and it is noteworthy that in the same commission appears the name of Sir Hugh of Eglintoun, whom the poet Dunbar, in his *Lament for the Makkars*, or poets, mentions with such regret.

Barbour received Royal recognition for his work. In 1377, the year after he completed his great poem, a sum of ten pounds was paid to him by King Robert II., and in 1378 a pension of twenty shillings, the last payment of which was made at Martinmas, 1394. Six years previously he had handed over this, which was a perpetual annuity specially granted for the compilation of the *Book of the Deeds of the Illustrious Prince, the late Lord King Robert de Bruce*, to the Cathedral of Saint Machar in Aberdeen to pay for masses for his parents, for his own soul, and for all the faithful dead, which were duly sung on the 13th day of March yearly down to the Reformation. The pension had six years previously been increased to ten pounds.

Although his name is connected only with this poem in popular memory, Wyntoun mentions another work, *The Stewartis Oryginale*, being a genealogy of the Stewart kings from Ninus, who built Nineveh. This is remarkable, because the descent of the Stewarts from Fitzalan, burgher of Dol in Brittany, was well known; but as that line had come to Scotland by way of England, it may have seemed important to lift the royal race out of touch with "the auld enemy."

> "Of Bruttus Lyneage quha wyll her,
> He luk the tretis of Barbere,
> Mad in-tyl a Genealogy
> Rycht wele, and mare perfytly
> Than I can on ony wys
> Wytht all my wyt to yowe dewys."

Hector Boece preserved this genealogy in his *History*, and it

passed on through the page of Holinshed to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

Blind Harry, in his *Wallace*, also says, with the vagueness which so often characterises the utterances of a blind man :

> "Master Barbour, quhilk was a worthi clerk
> He said the Bruce amang his othir werk."

Of those other poems, the most notable which have been attributed to him is the *Lives of the Saints*, discovered in manuscript in the Cambridge University Library by Bradshaw. It is written in the northern dialect, and may well be the work of a forgotten contemporary of Barbour. There is a strong local touch in the saints whose lives are recorded, St Machar's story following upon that of St Nicholas, linking on the poems to Old and New Aberdeen. Barbour's authorship has, however, been disputed and considered to be disproved by Koppel and by Buss. Two fragments of a translation from the *Troy Book* of Guido delle Colonne, with Barbour's name on them, are extant in Cambridge University. A portion of this is also preserved in the Bodleian Library. These are at any rate Scottish. With considerable plausibility *The Buik of Alexander*, which is preserved in a copy printed about 1580, has been considered to be the work of the Archdeacon. The epilogue, however, makes this very difficult of acceptance, as it fixes the date, thus :—

> "the time that God was borne
> To save our saullis that was forlorne,
> Sen syne is past ane thousand zeir
> Four hundreth and threttie thairto neir,
> And aucht and sum dele mare I wis."

Although he writes as a patriot, he looks along the line of vision of an ecclesiastic, for he traces all Bruce's early misfortunes to the act of sacrilege which he committed when he slew the Red Comyn at the altar of Dumfries.

There evidently had been a predecessor of Archdeacon Barbour's in his own field, for Patrick Gordon, who wrote a *Historie of the Valiant Bruce*, mentions a manuscript which he had received from "Donald Farquharson" containing fragments of a poem dealing with the great contest for national liberty, purporting to have been written by Peter Fenton, a monk of Melrose Abbey, in the year 1369.

The story of the vindication of Scottish independence is

a long story. Away back in 1174 William the Lion, having been captured by Henry II., could only win his freedom through surrendering the liberty of his country to the English king, by the Treaty of Falaise. Richard of the Lion Heart, however, by the Treaty of Canterbury, revoked the transaction as having been effected under unfair compulsion. When Alexander III., on that dark day, the 19th of March in 1286, fell over the cliff at Kinghorn, Scotland fell with him into anarchy. His death was the death-blow to such a period of prosperity as did not return to Scotland for hundreds of years. The Maid of Norway, Alexander's sole grandchild, was immediately acknowledged as Queen, but she died in Orkney on her way to Scotland. She was to have married the son of Edward I. of England, an arrangement settled in 1290 by the Treaty of Brigham, near Roxburgh, wherein the independence of Scotland was anxiously but clearly stipulated. Immediately on her death began contests and conferences among the claimants to the Crown, and Edward was invited to act as arbiter. His demand to be first of all recognised as Over-lord of Scotland was acknowledged by all the claimants and by the clergy and nobles, but never by the commons. In his proud ambition the English king ignored the act of the chivalrous Richard, the history of the last kings, and the Treaty of Brigham.

An abortive attempt after liberty brought Edward north. Marching victoriously as far as Elgin, he thrust Baliol from the throne, wrung submission from the barons and nobles, whose names he recorded in the Ragman's Roll; and, by removing with him into England the Stone of Destiny, on which the Scottish kings had always been crowned, as well as the famous Black Cross of the saintly Margaret, he dealt a blow at the holiest traditions and sentiments alike of the Celt and Saxon in the realm of Scotland.

In this devastating progress the English king had with him many of the Norman-Scottish lords, including Bruce himself, who afterwards stood as the Scottish hero at Bannockburn, his father the Earl of Carrick, and the High Steward of Scotland. The Scottish strongholds were manned by English soldiers; and the government itself fell to the hands of Englishmen. Never was a nation more wretchedly humbled. The Earl of Surrey was its military guardian; Ormesby was its Chief Justice; and Cressingham, of detested

memory, wrung out of the Scottish people the taxes which were needed to keep the English army in its place above them. Six months of this kind of thing were required to tune the nation's heart for liberty. But a man was needed to smite the awakening chord. And in 1297, from amongst the native people, appeared a sudden champion, Sir William Wallace, a man of Celtic stock, with Sir William Douglas as his coadjutor.

He appeared as unheralded as if he had stepped out of the stars, and behind him a little band of desperate men, who had chosen the conditions of outlawry in following him. His ranks rapidly became more numerous. The Norman nobility were abroad at the moment with Edward, and their vassals ran to the standard of Wallace. The Scottish clergy gave their sympathy. He slew Heselrigg, the Sheriff of Lanark. He flung himself against the strongholds throughout Scotland held by the English, and captured them. Bruce, Douglas, the Steward, and the Bishop of Glasgow attempted a rising in Ayrshire, and failed, but the blazing flame of Wallace's enthusiasm carried success wherever he was. Cressingham's correspondence shows how, through his personality, the English influence had come to nothing in Scotland, and that the English dominancy had toppled towards ruin.

At Stirling Bridge, through this hero's splendid generalship, a fully-equipped feudal army of England was scattered by a much inferior force of light-armed peasantry. The effect of the blow was that the English garrisons surrendered, and Wallace crossed the English borders, ravaging Northumberland and Cumberland, till his army grew tired of vengeance. He then tried to bring the nation back from warfare into touch with the arts of peace. He wrote to the magistrates of Lübeck and Hamburg on 11th October 1297, inviting renewal of commercial relations with Scotland. He gave protection to the monks of Hexham in terms very different from such as we should expect from the wretched outlaw and bloody dabbler in sacrilege depicted in the English chronicles.

Edward determined on a great revenge. With an army of ninety thousand men he sought Wallace at Falkirk on 22nd July 1298, and, through the dexterity of the English archers, he dragged Wallace down into defeat, in spite of

the notable courage of the Scottish spearsmen. No finer picture of faithful patriotism can be gathered anywhere than from the page of Langtoft, when he says of those brave men in their devoted ranks: "As a castle they stood, that was walled with stone."

From that date Wallace sinks into the mist. He was in France, and probably also in Rome. He received a letter of recommendation, which is preserved in the Tower of London, from King Philippe, whereby he was introduced to the favour of the Pope as "our loved William the Walleys of Scotland, Knight." The negotiations in Rome, however, failed, and he had to return to face the conflict once more. He found that his country had meanwhile been repeatedly invaded by Edward. The Scottish nobles were fickle, fighting now on one side, now on the other. Wallace, however, never again led an army, nor held any post of honour, and Edward could not now be prevented from marching the whole length of Scotland, leaving behind him continually a growing harvest of hate.

In the armistice of 1304 one man was excepted bitterly, and that man "William le Walleys." At length the hero was captured by treachery, and dragged off to the Tower. The record of the process against him proves his influence and weight, his high standing and reputation, and under the false charge of having been a traitor to Edward, to whom he had never sworn fealty, he was put to death with the accompanying barbarities of the time. Thereafter Scotland lay prostrate before the feet of Edward.

The English chroniclers are the earliest narrators of the deeds of Wallace, but they are ignorant of his position and his lineage, and they could not, of course, appreciate the purpose of his enthusiasm. They looked upon him only as a truculent outlaw. The *Lanercost Chronicle* calls him "princeps latronum." Hemingsburgh, quoting from the time of Edward I., designates him "latro publicus." He is by others styled "praedo," "incendarius," and "ignobilis progenie." There is no recognition by them of any greatness on his part; he is a scoundrel in deed and thought. It is very natural, for there is difficulty even in our time in writing an unprejudiced biography of the leader of the enemies of our nation in a campaign anywhere.

Bruce, however, a man of pure Norman lineage, an English

Baron, though of Scottish blood, connected by more than one marriage with the Royal House of Scotland, and grandson of the Bruce who had set his claims in rivalry to Baliol, now became interested in his own rights, and in the rights of Scotland. At first he was not consistent, but in 1306, before the high altar at Dumfries, he slew the Red Comyn, and was crowned at Scone as King. Defeated at Methven and at Strathfillan, he had to flee to Ireland for a season. But Edward's severity only drove the flame of Scottish hate deeper through the Scottish heart, and turned the more towards Bruce the sympathy of the Scottish people.

In 1307 Edward I. died, still with the bitter resolve to rivet Scotland to England's thraldom. "Carry my bones," said he, "at the head of the army till Scotland has been subdued!" His son, however, ignored the dynamic moment, and, in 1314, at Bannockburn was driven in disgrace from the field of his claims. Bruce was thereafter the pride of his people—a great king, legislator, and guardian of his realm. In legend and in poetry he remains the Scottish Alfred.

Barbour's function was that of the bard—when the work was finished, when men had witnessed the birth of a nation out of conflict and blood, to step forward and brand upon the heart of the people the true meaning of the fight for freedom which had just been ended.

The circumstances of his own time turned men's thoughts passionately back to the struggle of the great King Robert. David, the only son of Bruce, was only five years old when his father died, worn out by leprosy and the hardships of the struggle of his life. The baby prince had been married to Joanna, the sister of the English king. When Randolph, Earl of Moray, died in 1332, he was succeeded as regent by Donald, Earl of Mar, whom John Baliol's son Edward, reviving the claim of his family, defeated and slew, getting himself crowned at Scone, only to be driven in headlong flight out of Scotland. The outcast, however, returned with a strong army, which he had received from Edward III. of England, and on 19th July 1333, the regent, Archibald Douglas, at the head of the Scottish army, was defeated at Halidon Hill. Berwick was handed over absolutely to the king of England, while the castles of Jedburgh, Selkirk, Peebles, Dumfries, Haddington, Edinburgh, and Linlithgow were pledged as security for an annual tribute of two thousand

pounds. David the King, in May 1334, now ten years old, fled to the protection of France, and received residence in the Château Gaillard, the "saucy castle" of Richard the Lionhearted, on its white cliff looking over Les Andeleys. The Scots, however, struggled against the shame which had been thrust upon them, and retook their castles from the English. David, returning in 1341, took up his government, but five years later was taken at Neville's Cross to endure, as we have seen, eleven years' captivity, his kingship being entirely ignored, while Edward Baliol, as King of Scotland, surrendered crown and kingdom to the English. The ransom which was finally fixed for David's liberation was one hundred thousand English marks, equal to ninety thousand pounds.

It was now, especially, that the Scottish people were determined not to be used as chattels for the convenience of the Crown, David having proposed actually to pay part of his ransom by selling to the English king his succession to the throne of Scotland—a proposal which awoke absolute abhorrence in the Assembly of the Three Estates at Scone. They went back to the settlement of the throne on the line of Robert the High Steward, husband of Marjory, daughter of Robert the Bruce. The poverty of Scotland, which was intensified by the struggle to raise the heavy ransom, combined with the visitation of the plague, and several devastating storms, deepened the enmity between the little northern kingdom and the "auld foe" to the southward. It was, therefore, a period eminently suited for the intensifying of national aspirations through reminiscence of the splendid struggle of the great King Robert.

In Barbour's *Brus* we find the earnest, lofty fervour for things chivalrous and tender, which has been the keynote of Scottish poetry ever since his time. For the facts, he was in touch with many who had struck a blow for liberty with the king, and had felt their hearts uplifted by the clang of the struggle of the brave for Scotland's sake, as their bridle-reins clanked in the charge, following the king. For instance he will tell you :

> "A knycht, that then wes in his rowt,
> Worthi and wycht, stalwart and stout,
> Curtaiss and fayr, and off gud fame,
> Schyr Alane off Catkert by name,
> Tauld me this taile, as I sall tell."

The work is by no means a chronicle of pure history, although by Wyntoun and others it was taken as such. Like a true artist, the poet subordinates everything to the heroic figure that is the subject of the song, and which fills the eye and heart of the narrator. Thus one is somewhat astonished to find in this long chant of Scotland's liberation not a reference to Sir William Wallace, that radiant knight whose chivalry and patriotism keep the glory of his name living to all ages. Further, in order to secure artistic continuity—for he must have known the facts—he blends the story of Bruce and his grandfather, making the whole stream of the struggle of Scottish freedom flow out of one brave heart.

Notwithstanding this fiction, his poem is the most valuable document we have regarding the Scottish struggle for independence, certain statements whereby its veracity may be tested, standing the scrutiny of modern documentary research, and this though Barbour could not at the time he wrote have had access to the State papers which to-day confirm his verse. Thus, when Bruce was in hiding at Glentrool, in the Galloway wilds, he is said by Walter of Hemingsburgh, the English chronicler, to have had ten thousand followers, while Barbour states them to have been only about two hundred, and his estimate, considering the barrenness of the Bruce's retreat, must be the right one. Again, his statement of the number whom John of Lorn brought with him to the ranks of Aymer de Valence, namely, eight hundred men, is actually the number recorded in the warrant of De Valence, still extant in the Exchequer Rolls.

Once more, Fabyan, the Englishman, states that the winter of 1306-7 was spent by Bruce in Norway; but in January 1307 King Edward orders Hugh Bysset, of the Glens of Antrim, to join Menteith and Montacute with a fleet

"to put down Robert de Brus and destroy his retreat in the isles between Scotland and Ireland."

This establishes Barbour's statement that the king's place of refuge was the Island of Rathlin, whence at last he emerged in his descent upon Carrick in the spring of 1307.

His poem is as stern-set in gravity as were the faces of the Scottish chiefs themselves in that grim time of terrible

campaigning, when men who loved home and liberty looked deep into the gloomy things of death. He does not, as Sir Walter Scott would do, look round him while the fight is going on, taking in with an artist's eye the colour on the mountain side, the sun-glint on the waterfall, the eagles poised above the field of blood. He is too keenly interested in what the king does, and in what the king is saying, to trouble with a calendar of Nature or find a meaning in a curlew's cry when men are dying. There is little time for picture-painting when a nation is fighting for its life. Yet his references to Nature, though scarce, are evidently first-hand. His eyes and heart were not hermetically sealed. Take this picture where the king, pursued by Macdougall of Lorn, seeks the shelter of a wood. Observe how simple and direct a touch the artist has.

"The kyng . . .
held doun towards a vale,
Quher throu the wod a wattir ran."

You can see the glade where the tired king seeks security, just as if the narrator drew aside the curtain. There is the sound of running water in the picture. Twice he notices the Spring, with the singing of birds and the budding of the trees and flowers.

"This wes in were, quhen wynter-tyde — spring
With his blastes, hydwiss to byde,
Wes ourdriffin ; and byrdis smale,
As thristill and the nychtingale, — throstle
Begouth rycht meraly to syng ;
And for to mak in thair synging
Syndry notis, and soundis sere, — distinct
And melody plesande to here.
And the treis begouth to ma — make
Burgeonys and brycht blumys alsua, — shoots
To wyn the heling of thar hede,
That wikkit wyntir had thame reved ;
And all grewis begouth to spryng." — groves

Again he gives another glimpse of Nature as in the "moneth of May."

"Quhen byrdis syngis on the spray ;
Melland their notys with syndry soune, — mingling
For softness of that sweit sesoune ;
And lewis on the branchis spredis, — spread
And blomys bricht besyd thame bredis ;

And feldis florist ar with flowris,
Weill savourit, of seir colowris,
And all thing worthis blith and gay,
Quhen that this gud king tuk his way."

He does not linger, however; he must on with his hero!

It is true that there has been an attempt to look upon Barbour's picture of the portraiture of the Bruce as altogether a fiction of ideal knighthood. Freeman, in his *Historical Essays*, characterises this great figure of Scottish independence as

"traitor in turn to every cause, a hardened rebel, who at last took to patriotism as his only chance to escape the punishment of a treacherous private murder."

It is, of course, a historical fact that many a man has not clearly seen his full course at the outset of his career, and has probably only at last been compelled to take the final step into the campaign through a door on whose threshold lies the stain of blood. The compulsion of outlawry has very frequently in great conflicts been the dynamic hint which the wavering soul receives. Bruce laboured under the disadvantage of having been educated at the English Court, and the incertitude of the rivalry of opposing claims made fog hang over the issue at the offset.

On Barbour's page, among other figures, Douglas stands out a living picture, full of national power. His is the only character deemed worthy by the poet to be set alongside of that of the supreme protagonist,

"To quhom into chevelry
I dar peir nane wes in his day."

Well might he be there by the side of his chief, for his father fought with Wallace, and, having been thrown into prison, his estates were confiscated, and then in his dungeon he was secretly murdered. The thought of the wrongs of his family was like a brooding cloud about the young knight's heart, till the cloud flashed lightnings when Bruce gave the awakening call. Barbour tells us how the very name of the "Black Douglas" made the flesh of the English sentries creep upon their bones. Yet he was likewise "courteous and debonair."

"Quhen he was blyth, he was lufly,
And meyk and sweyt in cumpany;
Bot quha in battail mycht him se,
All othir contenance had he."

Everything that is worth remembering, and everything the heart treasures—heroic, manlike, kingly—in the nation's champion has its source in Barbour's poem. There is such a tone of genuineness, such a power of natural painting, that you feel the liberator and the monarch eminently a true man, without a trace of ambition or charlatanry. He stands out as a hero, hardened, ennobled, through the beating of the hail of seven years' warfare round about him.

Barbour subordinates to his chief figure all others, however noble, in the great campaign, and his poem breathes the brave pride of his country in her fairly-won freedom, when the little band of rude Scots rolled back into disaster the huge army of the chivalry and yeomanry of England. Nothing can ever detract from the splendid simplicity of his address to his troops in the face of the overwhelming foe at Bannockburn, which is the basis of the eternal giant song of Burns:

"That quhat sa euir man that fand
His hert nocht sekir for till stand
To wyn all or de with honour,
For to mantayne that stalward stour, fight
That he be tyme suld take his way,
And nane suld dwell with him bot thai
That wald stand with him to the end,
And take the ure that God wald send." chance

One can hear a real heartbeat in this, which should be in gold across the Scottish flag for ever:

"A! fredome is a noble thing!
Fredome mayss man to haiff liking; delight
Fredome all solace to man giffis;
He levys at ess that frely levys!
A noble hart may haiff nane ess,
Na ellys nocht that may him pless,
Gyff fredome failyhe; for fre liking
Is yharnyt our all othir thing.
Na he, that ay hass levyt fre,
May nocht knaw weill the propyrte,
The angyr, na the wrechyt dome,
That is cowplyt to foule thyrldome.
Bot gyff he had assayit it,
Than all perquer he suld it wyt, thoroughly
And suld think fredome mar to pryss,
Than all the gold in warld that is."

He has touches of tenderness even in times of stress and strife, as when, after thinking the great king dead, Lennox

and his followers meet him and his little band, hungry and ragged, in the wilds, and break into weeping for joy; or when Bruce holds his army till a poor laundress should be succoured in her distress.

The poem has not fire for us to-day, but for the poet himself and those of his day whose feelings would be stirred by the memories the verse could kindle, it must have had an effect which we cannot fully grasp. Its natural movement, the short narrative iambic beat of its lines, the clear-eyed vision, its simplicity and innate nobility of sentiment and sense, impart to it an epic place in virtue of its own right. Scott's debt to it is written large over his work.

It is remarkable that in Barbour's *Brus* there is no mention of Wallace. This is not more wonderful than the omission of the name of King James I. from Dunbar's list of departed "makkars," or the absence of any reference to Mary, Queen of Scots, in Michael Bruce's *Lochleven*. One must, of course, remember that Wallace fought on behalf of the House of Baliol, and probably also Barbour felt it his duty to keep his attention concentrated on the great figure of his own hero. Wyntoun, in his *Chronicle* (*circa* 1426), is the first Scottish writer to speak of him. He mentions his gentle pedigree, but it was not till much later that his identification with Ellerslie, his huge strength, and his absolute invincibility, began to grow into what was left of historic fact. Without Wallace, undoubtedly Scotland would never have known itself as a nation with a life and aspirations of its own, but would only have had as its story a long ache of vassalage dragged in the darkness of the shadow of England. He scored the trenches in which it was possible for the flower of liberty to blossom in unforgotten fragrance.

There was yet another figure of a later day whose rugged song fed the stream of Scottish patriotic poetry in recounting the redoubtable valour of the other great giant of Scottish story in the fight for freedom and national independence, namely, the wandering singer who has come down to us under the popular title of Harry the Minstrel, or, from his physical defect, Blind Harry, who wrote *The Acts and Deeds of the Illustrious and Valiant Champion, Sir William Wallace, Knight of Ellerslee.*

Who reads Blind Harry now? And yet his book was one of the most familiar favourites of rural firesides, as was

the minstrel himself, when the wind without was wild, and the blind face kindled with light under the spell of the fervid story! All that is really known of this man is contained in a few lines of John Major's history, *De Gestis Scotorum*. He there speaks of Harry as having been blind from his birth, and as reciting his story of the great hero's deeds

"in presence of men of the foremost rank, whereby he earned his clothing and his food."

His surname has not survived. His place of birth and death alike is forgotten. To his own time and all ages he is simply "Blind Harry the Minstrel." In the accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of James IV. for 1490 to 1492 we find:

"At the Kingis commande to Blinde-Hary, eighteen shillings. . . .

"On New yeris da, to Blinde-Hary, eighteen shillings."

In April 1492, he gets a few shillings, and then there is just a simple mention of his name, and he appears no more. But Dunbar, in his *Lament for the Makkars* in 1508, mourns his death among that of other Scottish poets.

The poem exists in a single manuscript in the Advocates' Library, in the hand of John Ramsay, who was the scribe of the two extant copies of *The Brus*. It has been conjectured that the narrative was written by Ramsay to the minstrel's dictation.

His poetical narrative consists of about twelve thousand lines, rugged but dramatic, and straightforward as the beat of a drum. Doubtless the poem grew by repeated accretions, as he was able to gather new stories of his hero at the fireside of the humble and in the halls of the nobles, where in equal measure he was welcomed. It is a pathetic figure that is behind those lines, chanting the glory of his country's brave stand against tyranny!

Now and again he pauses in his narrative to give glimpses of Nature—some of them very touching, as when he tells of the joyous July with plenty of herb and fruit, and food for man and beast everywhere, but Scotland lying wasted and bare from war and harrying foes. These, however, follow in their descriptive vocabulary the conventional methods of poetic tradition.

His poem was most popular, and in 1722 a new version of it, by Hamilton of Gilbertfield, carried on, for another generation, along the villages and farm towns of Scotland, the patriotic voice. The fact of Burns's indebtedness to Blind Harry, through this version, speaks not a little for its power. In his letter to Doctor Moore, in August 1787, he says:

"The first two books I ever read in private, and which gave me more pleasure than any two books I ever read again, were the *Life of Hannibal* and the *History of Sir William Wallace*. . . . The story of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice in my veins, which will boil along there till the floodgates of life shut in eternal rest."

The poem, of course, is not exact history, though Harry asserts that he had as his authority a Latin record of John Blair, Wallace's chaplain. The doughty deeds of the chaplain are said to have been inserted by Thomas Gray, who was parson at Liberton. Blair's book is not now in existence, but no contemporary of Wallace could have written such a record as Blind Harry hands on to us. The minstrel himself must be taken as sponsor for the most of it. The poem is a romantic picture of a great national hero blurred by the loving memory of his splendid achievement, magnified by the natural exaggeration of a blind bard's uncontrolled imaginative ecstasy. His references to Charlemagne and others mean nothing except that he knew the poetic stock of his craft. The hero is represented as carrying on his majestic conflict through the whole period from Alexander's death till Bannockburn, though the tragedy of his betrayal culminated in 1305.

In Barbour and Blind Harry the country's patriotism had constant mentors. In radiant strength the king and the hero stand, the soul of chivalry to friend and foe, like a blasting wind of judgment to traitors, like an angel of confidence to those who follow them, inspiring the heroism of their own and later times.

For many a day in Scotland through these poets the names of Wallace and Bruce beat in the nation's heart, fostering a hatred of the English race which for centuries remained, embittering relations, and hindering mutual progress.

CHAPTER VI

WYNTOUN, FORDUN, HUCHOWNE, ETC.

Barbour's *Brus* occupied the position of an advocate pleading the splendid fact of Scotland as a nation. That pleading was supported by Andrew of Wyntoun's *Orygynalle Cronykil of Scotland*, but from a different point of argument. The *Brus* set forth the glory of the independence of Scotland as achieved and won by her great deliverer; but Wyntoun based his argument for the majesty of Scotland, as an independent nation, on the ground of the vast antiquity of the record of her nationality. The same principle was followed by his contemporary Fordun in his *Latin Chronicle*.

It is rather touching to read Andrew of Wyntoun's simple statement about himself:

"And for I wyll nane bere the blame
Of my defawte, this is my name
Be baptysyne, Androwe of Wyntoune,
Of Sanct Androwys a chanowne
Regulare, bot noucht-for-thi
Of thaim all the lest worthy:
Bot of thare grace and thare fawoure
I wes, but meryt, made priowre
Of the ynche wyth-in Loch-lewyne,
Hawand tharof my lytil ewyne
Of Sanct Androwys dyocesy,
Betwene the Lomownde and Benarty."

St Serf's, Lochleven, was one of the five priories subordinate to that of St Andrews.

Nothing further is known of Wyntoun's birth or family, but he concluded his *Cronykil* in 1420. A canon regular of St Andrews, he some time about 1395 became Prior of St Serf's, Lochleven, where he quietly spent his days in gentle retirement and studious industry. Towards the close of his

Cronykil he mentions tokens of serious and sore sickness coming upon him, and it is not likely that he long survived the close of his work.

Wyntoun did not claim to be a poet, though he wrote in verse. It is a kind of rhyming prose which he writes, without poetic elevation or vision. He never rises above a very pedestrian level, and he does not so much paint his characters as just take a walk round about them, so giving a very external description of their appearance. The best he can say of Alexander III. is :

> "He was stedfast in crystyn fay, (faith)
> Relygyows men he honoryde ay.
> He luivyd all men that were wertuows
> He lathyd (loathed) and chastyd all vytyows."

He is essentially a recorder. Even the momentous struggles of the past, the brave warfare of his people, cannot thrill him, or move him out of the jog-trot of his commonplace. He is always the man of the cloister, and he writes in the shadow of Holy Church. His outlook on England and Englishmen is comfortably bounded by the certainty of their irremediable damnation as Englishmen. He does not hesitate to say of Edward :

> "The sawlys that he gert to slay down thare
> He send quhare his sawle nevyrmare
> Wes lyk to come, that is the blys
> Quhare alkyn joy ay lestand is."

He does not believe that Englishmen have any honourable sense of the sacredness of obligations.

> "It is of Inglis natioune
> The commone kind conditioune
> Of Trewis the wertu to forget,
> And rekles of gud Faith to be."

Without intending it, Wyntoun chose a better title than he knew when he called his *Cronykil* the *Orygynalle Cronykil*. He meant thereby that it went back to the beginning of the world, dealing with Adam and Eve, Cain, Seth, and the giants, especially Corinius and Gog Magog ; the Ark, Paradise, India, and the origins of language, race, and worship. It is, in fact, a general summary of universal knowledge. He then tagged Scotland on to actual sources, as a most important

part of the divine will and purpose in creation. He quite evidently considered that the Biblical method was slightly deficient, in that, while it dealt so fully with the children of Israel, it ignored the history of his own country. In his *Cronykil*, Scotland scrambles out on its hands and knees from myth, tradition, and world-story, which, like a land-slip, almost smother it before it can escape them. And not until the sixth book of the *Cronykil* does Wyntoun go into the history of Scotland at considerable length, with the reign of King Ewan, who enjoyed the crown, according to Wyntoun, in the year 724. This is typical of his work, for he dearly loves to give day and date for everything.

There is no doubt whatever that he utilised authorities as he had access to them, monkish narratives and such like, of which no trace now remains. He also included, by method of incorporation, a Scottish chronicle dealing with the period from the birth of David II. to the death of Robert II., while he stuck into the place where he required them three hundred lines of Barbour's *Brus*, referring all who were interested in the life and work of Scotland's hero, after the murder of the Red Comyn at the altar in Dumfries, to Barbour's poem. He soberly writes down among historical fact the quaintest and most impossible legendary tales which appeal to himself and his age. Especially notable, however, is his account of Macbeth's meeting with the witches. This episode, after passing through the hands of Hector Boece, walked, clothed with mystery, into the mind of Shakespeare. The *Cronykil*, however, is of value for its record from the death of Bruce till 1420, being for that period, indeed, the best authority existing.

The endeavour of the historians of this time to magnify their country's origin made them pervert history and turn truth upside-down. The Scots were shown to have been in Scotland before the Picts. The attempt was, of course, to glorify the descent of the Scottish people, and especially of the Stewart kings, at the expense of the English. Nothing was considered too daring or ridiculous in this direction. It is interesting to look at some of the links of genealogy. Gedell Glaiss was the son of Sir Newill, who came out of Scythia into Greece, descended directly by twenty degrees from Japheth, the son of Noah, from whom also descended the Orders of Knighthood. One of the children of Sir Newill

and Scota would, of course, have succeeded to the throne of the Pharaohs, but after the disaster to the Egyptians, when the king was drowned in the Red Sea, the barons of Egypt ordered all aliens to leave their country. Gedell Glaiss went to Spain, but, hearing of a great country beyond the sea, sent three ships with armed men for enquiry over towards it. These pioneers received an unkind welcome, and Gedell Glaiss just dying at that moment, his son Heber sailed to the new land, conquered it, slew all recalcitrants, and in honour of his mother called the country Scotland. The fact of Basque being unintelligible to Wyntoun made him identify it as the sedimentary deposit of Gaelic left by this exodus in Spain. The exact date of the marriage of Pharaoh's daughter is, with characteristic clearness, definitely recorded.

Wyntoun, naturally, being Prior of St Serf's, Lochleven, was interested in the life and work of that saint, who was that son of the King of Canaan who left the kingdom to his younger brother and went on through Alexandria, Constantinople, and Rome, until he reached Scotland.

Wyntoun is the earliest Scottish writer to mention Wallace, and in contra-distinction from the English writers, who mention him with scorn, he tells us that he was

> "cummyn of gentlemen
> His fadyre wes a manly knycht."

It is also on the page of Wyntoun's *Cronykil* that the quaint lament for Alexander III., already referred to, is preserved.

The scheme of Wyntoun's *Cronykil*, in nine books, was in honour of the nine orders of the angels, just as Herodotus wrote his history dedicated to the nine muses.

Wyntoun quotes Aristotle, Galen, and Josephus, though he could not have known them in the Greek. He also quotes Homer, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Statius, Dionysius Cato, Boethius, Dares Phrygius, and Dictys Cretensis, Valerius Maximus, Justin and Solinus, with, among the fathers, Jerome and Augustine.

Considering the difficulties which confronted a historian of his time, it is marvellous to see the proofs of his industry, and to note the standard of attainment which he reached.

Wyntoun did not write in Latin, as he declares his purpose to be that every man should understand the story of his race. The labours of Wyntoun and the other chroniclers

were intended to remind their own fellow-countrymen that their own Scottish liberty and independence had a long and ancient history, and to show their enemies that the determined and resolute struggle of Scotland did not arise from wantonness of battle-hunger, but in vindication of long-established and ancient rights.

Contemporary with Barbour also, and attached, at the time of his death, to the Cathedral of Aberdeen, was John of Fordun, who compiled the *Scotichronicon*. It is stated in a manuscript narrative that after King Edward Longshanks had destroyed and carried out of the kingdom the records of Scotland, this John of Fordun endeavoured to fill up the deficiency so caused in the story of his nation. His annals, thus undertaken, came down to 1385. In these he lays the foundation of the history of Scotland up to his own day. After a discussion of the world and paradise, and of the islands of Europe, Albion, and Hibernia, he gives an account of the beginning of the Scots, and of their King Gadelus, and those after him, down to the time of the deplorable accident in the Red Sea, when Pharaoh was drowned. Thereafter it brings the Scots into Albion. He proves that, from the beginning, Scotland was independent of Britain, taking as his authority for this the English chroniclers Geoffrey of Monmouth and William of Malmesbury. He sets forth the struggles of the Scots for their independence against the tyrant Maximus, and shows the influence of Scotland for good in Europe by the example of the two Scottish monks who persuaded Charlemagne to found the University of Paris. Thence, on through the reign of Macbeth goes the quiet man of the cloister, with downcast eyes, yet observant of all that is passing round him and of all that he hears, till the close of the reign of David I. in 1153. Death overtook him ere he could put the rest of his material in order, so he handed this over to Walter Bower, Abbot of Inchcolm, in the Firth of Forth. This being supplemented by Sir David Stewart of Rosyth, and by the fruits of his own research, Walter Bower was able to add eleven books to the five which John of Fordun had written. It is, of course, in Latin, and, while a wedge out of Scottish life, it cannot claim to be poetic, except from the accident of dealing sometimes in a calm way with very romantic episodes. Bower died in 1449. His

abridgment, known as the *Book of Cupar*, is in manuscript in the Advocates' Library of Edinburgh.

John of Fordun was acquainted with the literary authorities of his class of work, for he shows knowledge of Bede and Gildas, Geoffrey of Monmouth, and William of Malmesbury, Higden and Henry of Huntingdon, Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, and Orosius, Adamnan, Alcuin, and Turgot. Ennius, Virgil, Sallust, Seneca, and Suetonius, among the classics, are also quoted by him.

When Wyntoun is mentioning King Arthur and his Court, he speaks loudly in praise of a poet of the Scottish Court called Huchowne :

"That cunnand wes in literature.
He made the gret gest of Arthure,
And the Awntyre off Gawaine,
The Pystyll als of Swete Swsane ;
He wes curyws in hys style,
Fare of Facund, and subtyle, eloquence
And ay to plesans and delyte,
Mad in metre mete his dyte :
Lytil or nocht nevyrtheles
Waverand fra the suthfastness."

The *Pystyll of Swsane* is the only poem about which there can be no dispute as to whether it is Huchowne's. There are five manuscripts extant, but the oldest is in the Bodleian Library, and is of date about 1380, but its corruptions are so apparent that this manuscript cannot be considered to be the original copy. Though all of these manuscripts have un-Scottish peculiarities, the poem can be shown to be of northern origin.

Yet it is remarkable that " Huchowne of the Awle Ryale " is not mentioned in Dunbar's *Lament for the Makkaris*. In that dirge, however, there is the following verse :—

"The gude Syr Hew of Eglintoun,
Ettrick, Heryot, et Wyntoun,
He has tane out of this cuntre.
Timor Mortis conturbat me."

It is true that in the same poem you find :

" Clerk of Tranent eik he has tane,
That made the anteris of Gawaine ;" adventures

The adventures of Gawain, however, formed a universal poetic topic, so that this is of no importance in the matter of identification. What is known is that Sir Hugh of Eglintoun married a half-sister of Robert II., and died about 1375. He was therefore contemporary with "Huchowne," and it is suggested that these are the names of one individual, covered by the reference to "Syr Hew of Eglintoun." An hypothesis was thrown out by Amours that there were two Sir Hughs "of Eglintoun," "Syr" being the usual title of a priest as well as of a knight, but it is so improbable as to be incredible.

The curious designation of the "Awle Ryale" has been interpreted the "Royal Palace," and in view of the semi-regal marriage connection of Sir Hugh of Eglintoun it is a quite plausible explanation.

Hugh of Eglintoun, in 1361, was a justiciary of Lothian. In 1367 he was one of the commissioners negotiating peace with England, and, as we saw, he was a brother-in-law of King Robert II., who, when he became king in 1371, gave Sir Hugh grants of land and tokens of favour. His name is frequently found in the books of the Court Chamberlain of Scotland between 1348 and 1375. Unfortunately, Dunbar's *Lament* gives no guidance to the date of the poet referred to, for he just mentions the deceased "makkars" as they come into his memory. Much ignorance has been shown in the discussion as to the identity or difference of the names "Huchowne" and "Hew." In Scotland they are known to have been identical, Huchowne being the corruption of Uisdean or Houston, the diminutive of Aodh or Hugh. The legal documents of the country, and especially of the Highlands, where the name Hugh is common amongst the clan Mackay, show this to be so, where "Huchown M'Y"—that is, Hugh the son of Hugh—is continually met with. The statement of the *Cambridge History of English Literature* that Huchowne and M'Huchowne are Lowland and Highland forms is not correct, for both are equally Celtic, as every Gael knows. The fact that Eglintoun is in Ayrshire makes it quite natural that the individual Hugh should be spoken of in both forms, if we remember *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy*.

The other works referred to by Wyntoun as by this author are difficult, indeed, to identify. As we have seen, the topics

of them were favourite ones among poets. The non-rhyming alliterative poem *Mort Arthure*, in the Thornton manuscript at Lincoln, has been declared by Trautmann to be the *Gest of Arthure*, on the ground of its containing the erroneous statement that Lucius Iberius was emperor, while he really was only procurator, an error which Wyntoun specially mentions.

> "Syne Huchowne of the Awle Ryale
> Intill hys Gest hystoryale
> Cauld Lucius Hiberius Emperoure,
> Quhen Kyng of Brettane was Arthoure;
>
> "Fra blame than is the Autore quhyte,
> As before him he fand to-wryte, written
> And men of gud dyscretyowne
> Suld excuse and love Huchowne."

The *Mort Arthure* consists of 4,346 lines of alliterative verse without rhyme. The manuscript in Lincoln which contains it is a miscellany of English and Latin verse and prose, which was for the most part copied by Robert Thornton, Archdeacon of Bedford, in the diocese of Lincoln, who was living in 1459. In the poem, Arthur is feasting with his knights and bishops. At the feast, on New Year's Day, a Roman senator appears demanding tribute on behalf of Lucius Iberius, the Roman Emperor. Barbour makes the same confusion between emperor and procurator. Andrew of Wyntoun apologises, as we have seen, for the very mistake which Huchowne made in his poem, and this is one of the links which enable us plausibly to identify this composition with Huchowne's *Gest of Arthure*.

Gawain is the chief of the knights in the poem. Modred, who has been left in charge of Britain, with Queen Guinevere in his care, while Arthur marches to Italy in warfare against the Emperor of Rome, becomes guilty of treason, on learning which Arthur turns back homewards, defeating a fleet of the Danes who have joined Modred. Gawain is slain by Modred, who himself mourns the death of this most lovely knight. Arthur, in his lamentation, dips his beard in Gawain's blood, and then presses on to Cornwall, where, with his eighteen hundred, he faces Modred's sixty thousand. Despite the disparity of forces, Arthur has the victory given to him, but falls mortally wounded. Meanwhile Guinevere has taken the veil at Caerleon.

Huchowne has also been credited with the unrhymed alliterative *Gest Historiall of the Destruction of Troy*, translated from Guido delle Colonne, *Sir Gawain and the Grene Knycht*, and *Golagros and Gawaine*, the last of which was printed, with other Scottish poems, by Chepman and Myllar in 1508 The poem, alliterative and rhyming, called the *Awntyres of Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne*, has been tentatively identified with the *Awntyre of Gawain*, the claim of Huchowne being strengthened by the existence at the beginning of the manuscript of the name "Hugo de." From the difference in style of it, as compared with two acknowledged works of Huchowne, it is conjectured, however, that this might be the poem of Clerk of Tranent mentioned by Dunbar.

The fact of the poet's concentration on the Arthurian cycle seems to help to corroborate the identification of Huchowne with Sir Hugh of Eglintoun, for this cycle was the peculiar property of the Cymric race, and Ayrshire belonged to the ancient Cymric kingdom. It was therefore very natural that a poet of that territory should deal with this subject.

In the matter of vocabulary, the *Mort Arthure* reproduces the voice and tone of *The Pystyll of Swsane*. Tried by this test, it is almost clear that the *Pearl*, *Cleanness*, *Patience*, and *Syr Gawaine and the Grene Knycht* are not by the same author as the *Mort Arthure* and *The Pystyll of Swsane*.

On the same principle the *Destruction of Troy*, *Golagros and Gawain*, and the *Awntyres of Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne*, seem to stand apart from the rest. The description of the *Gest of Arthure* is given by Wyntoun in such detail that there seems to be quite convincing evidence of the identity of that poem with the *Mort Arthure* of Huchowne.

Another strong piece of evidence is found in the names of places recorded by Geoffrey of Monmouth and the *Brut* of Layamon, which are different from those mentioned by Wyntoun, who states that he is following the poem of Huchowne, because that poem is in accordance with the ancient records in some parts, whereas in other parts it is wide of old authorities. This is found correspondingly in the *Mort Arthure*.

Reminiscent also of Huchowne's poems in style and metre is Holland's *Buke of the Howlat*, of date some time before 1460. In Blind Harry's poem, in the jealousy between

Stewart and Wallace, the former applies to Wallace the fable of the owl in parrot feathers, which very probably refers to this poem. Although the apologue was probably familiar enough, the *Buke of the Howlat* belongs to the old school of romance, with alliterative rhyming lines elaborately constructed, and with variety of rhythm, as may be seen from the following stanza.

"This riche Revir down ran, but resting or ruf, pause
Throwe ane forest on fold, that farly was fair;
All the brayis of the brym bair branchis abuf,
And birdis blythest of ble on blossoms bair; hue
The land lowne was and le, with lykking and luf,
And for to lende by that laike thocht me levar
Because that thir hartes in heirdis couth huf, abide
Pransand and prunzeand, be pair and be pair.
Thus sat I in solace, sekerly and sure,
Content of the fair firth
Mekle mair of the mirth,
Als blyth of the birth
That the ground bure."

Along with Barbour's name Holland is mentioned by Dunbar. His poem is in two manuscripts—the Asloan, about 1515, and the Bannatyne, about 1568. The poem is older than the earlier of these manuscripts. It was probably written about 1450, and it has for its scene the Forest of Darnaway, in Morayshire.

Holland was a priest, hence he is often called "Syr" Richard. He identified himself entirely with the Douglas faction, speaking lovingly of "Douglas, tendir and trew." The *Buke of the Howlat* was ostensibly written for Elizabeth Dunbar, Countess of Moray, whose first husband was the brother of that Earl of Douglas whom James II. murdered in Stirling at the famous "Douglas Supper" in 1440. The limits for the composition of the poem may be fixed as between 1447 and 1452, as the arms of Pope Nicholas V. are detailed in it, and there is no reference to the murder of Earl William in 1452.

The peacock is pope of the bird world, and the howlat, or owl, feeling himself dissatisfied with his plumage, begs the peacock to plead with Nature for his improvement. A general council which is called decides to appeal to the eagle, which is the emperor of the birds, and resides in the Tower of Babylon. To him the swallow is sent as messenger.

The woodpecker, as pursuivant, bears the heraldic symbols of the Pope, the German Emperor, the King of France, and the King of Scotland, and invests in outstanding honour the arms of the Douglas family. There is a great display of fancy and considerable humour, with not a little touch of satire. The deans of colleges are represented by ganders, and the archdeacon by a goose, while the dove, murmuring to his mate, is a curate hearing confession, and

> "Cryand Crawis and Cais, that cravis the corne,
> War pure freris forthward,
> That, with the leif of the lard,
> Will cum to the corne yard
> At ewyn and at morn."

The poem includes an account of the journey of Sir James Douglas to the Holy Land with the Bruce's heart, a version, however, which is not the one usually accepted in history, as it asserts that the "good Sir James" had reached the Holy Land, and was on his return homewards when he was slain in Spain. There is a description of a banquet, to which the Pope invited the Emperor and his train. The feast was cooked by the bittern, while the mavis, merle, lark, nightingale and ouzel discoursed music from the minstrel's gallery. The dislike to the Celt which is found in the verse of Dunbar finds a place here also, when the rook appears as a Gaelic bard reciting what, of course, to the Lowlander, seemed contemptible gibberish, because he did not know what it meant. The poor Gael is mocked at by the lapwing and the cuckoo, who are the Court jesters. The owl, in answer to her petition thus presented, receives a feather from each of the birds, but, at once overborne with pride, struts so impertinently and annoyingly that she is stripped of her borrowed plumage, and has to flit about again in grey in the gloom.

Little is known of the author, yet this much is clear, that in 1450 he was rector of Halkirk in Caithness, in which parish he must have found himself out of place without knowledge of the Celtic tongue. Next year he was rector of Abreichan, where again he could only cover his own ignorance by affecting contempt for what he did not understand. In 1453 the Pope presented him to the chantries of the Church of Moray. Four years afterwards, the Douglases having fallen into disgrace, he was in Orkney,

and after ten years there surrendered the vicarage of Ronaldshay. Thereafter he joined the exiled Douglases in England, but in 1482 was excluded, as a "traitor and sworn Englishman," from the general indulgence.

The poet was evidently aware of the traditional prophecy in regard to the destiny of the king of Scotland, for he says :

> "Our soueraine of Scotland his armes to knawe
> Quhilk sall be lord and ledar
> Our braid Brettane all quhar
> As Sanct Margaretis air,
> And the signe schawe."

An Arthurian romance, *Lancelot of the Laik*, strongly saturated with the influence of Chaucer, belongs to the northern kingdom, and is ostensibly, according to the usual poetic diction of the day, a dream of a lover in a leafy garden; when he wakes he resolves to tell it to his lady, and to use it as expressive of his love to her. Considerations of linguistic and grammatical usage point to its being of a later date than 1497, when James Auchinleck, or Affleck, to whom it has been attributed, died.

In the Auchinleck manuscript there is also found a romantic tale *Roland and Ferragus*, the latter being a giant forty feet high, whom the Sultan of Babylon sent to fight against Charlemagne. Ogier the Dane is carried off under the giant's arm to his castle; the others are dealt with in similar fashion. Then ten knights are carried off at once, but Roland fought with the giant a whole day with his sword, ineffectively. Next day he fought with a knotted club. The giant, while sleeping, seemed so uncomfortable that Roland's chivalry was stirred to put a stone under his head for a pillow. Touched by this kindness, the giant, in conversation, revealed his only vulnerable part. Roland tries to convert him to Christianity, but the giant prefers to put it to the test by battle again, when Roland is conveniently helped by an angel to overthrow him.

A poem contemporary with these is the *Taill of Rauf Coilzear*, "how he harberit King Charles." There is no manuscript authority for it extant. In the index of the Asloan manuscript it is mentioned, but the text has been lost. It depends upon Leprevik's printed edition, a copy of which was discovered in 1821, after all hope of tracing the poem,

referred to in Joseph Ames's *Typographical Antiquities*, of 1749, had practically been abandoned. It follows the conventional mould of stories of kings who have lost their way in the forest. Charlemagne, being benighted and alone, finds shelter in the hovel of Ralph the Collier. The churl, with characteristic rudeness treats the king as Alfred was treated, and others whose adventures have come down in ballad literature, smacking him with familiar violence at his table. Under the pretence that he is only a royal servant, the king, on leaving, invites the woodlander to bring a supply of fuel to the royal house. When Ralph appears he finds to his consternation that his guest is the great king himself. On the narration of his adventures and experiences, the courtiers decided that Ralph was worthy of death, but the king remembers his hospitality, and confers the honour of knighthood upon the churl, who rises to the honour conferred upon him, and becomes in time the Marshal of France. There is a combination of the humour of Chaucer and Rabelais in the poem, which made it familiarly popular amongst the people. Dunbar refers to it in his reminder to the king:

> "Quhen seruit is all udir man,
> Gentill and semple of euery clan,
> Kyne of Rauf Coilzear and John the Reif,
> Na thing I get nor conquest than."

John the Reif is a story similar in spirit to *Rauf Coilzear*. The incident is laid in the time of Edward Longshanks, who, with a bishop and an earl, was stranded for the night without shelter. It was written at the time when English history only knew the names of three Edwards—

> "Of that name there were kingis three,
> But Edward of the Longshanks was he,
> A lord of great renown."

John is a fearless, frank yeoman, and by the aid of his two neighbours, long Hobkin and Hob, his wife, and two daughters, entertains the king and his two companions. At first, rude fare which the king would not look at was laid upon the board, but after promising not to tell the king, venison, fine wine, spiced bread, and other good things make their appearance. John's fate is pretty much the same as Rauf's, for he is knighted.

Dunbar's list of the "makkaris" in his *Lament* contains the names of many Scottish poets, besides "the good Sir Hugh of Eglintoun," as we have seen.

Nothing whatever is known of Ettrick or Heryot. John Clerk is in the same case. James Affleck is probably the same as James Auchinleck, a name which was, and still is in certain districts, pronounced Affleck. He was known as servitor of the Earl of Ross, and when he died in 1497, the chantry of Caithness, which was thus rendered vacant, was given by the Earl to James Beaton. The poem called the *Quair of Jealousy*, in the Selden manuscripts, has at the finish of it "explicit quod Auchin," and it may be his work.

"Sir Mungo Lokart of the Le" was also mentioned in the *Lament for the Makkaris*, but what his works were we do not know.

Clerk of Tranent's *Awntyris of Gawaine* mentioned by the poet, has been identified with *Gawain and Golagros*, which was printed in 1508 by Chepman and Myllar.

"Schir Gilbert Hay" was evidently Chamberlain to Charles VI. of France, and completed, in twenty thousand lines, about 1460, a translation of a French metrical romance, *The Buke of the Conqueror, Alexander the Great.* "Sandy Traill" is another of the lost, but "Patrick Johnstoun" was rewarded between 1488 and 1492 for plays before the king. A poem attributed to him is in the Bannatyne manuscript. In it three death's-heads, *The Three Deid Pows*, speak warnings to thoughtless youth:

"O sinfull man! in to this mortall se
Quhilk is the vail of mvrnyng and of cair
With gaistly sicht behold oure heidis thre,
Oure holkit ene, our peilit pollis bair. hollowed
As ye are now, in to this warld we wair
Als fresche, als fair, als lusty to behald:
Quhan thow lukis on this swth examplair true
Of thy self, man, thow may be richt vnbald." cautious

In the Maitland manuscript this poem is attributed to Henryson, and it is not possible to settle the question of authorship with the entire lack of evidence at hand. It at any rate shows somewhat of the influence of parts of his *Cresseid.*

Mersar's work was evidently known to Lyndsay, who

speaks highly of it, but, except for four verses against false lovers, with the refrain,

"Sic perell lyis in paramouris,"

nothing else is known, though two other poems, *Off Luve quhay Lykis to haif joy* and *Their Bills are Brevit*, stand to his name in the Bannatyne MS.

"Roull of Aberdene" and "Gentill Roull of Corstorfine" remain only on Dunbar's page, although a poem called *Rowlis Cursing* appears in the manuscript of Bannatyne.

"Broun" may be the poet who, in that manuscript, has two poems attributed to him, on the judgment of God, and evidently was a priest.

"Schir Johne the Rois" was apparently an intimate of Dunbar's, and was a go-between of Kennedy and Dunbar. Of his works nothing is known.

"Gentill Stobo" was John Reid, who had a pension of ten pounds doubled by James III., who styles him "Johanie red nuncupato Stobo." In 1488 and 1491 he appears as rector of Glasgow Kirk, but nothing is known of his works.

"Quintin Schaw" is the last to be mentioned. In Gawain Douglas's *Palice of Honour* he is Quintin the poet, appearing in the Court of Muses by right of merit. Six stanzas of his are extant, being advice to a courtier. The practical common-sense of this is shown in the two well-known verses:

"Gif changes the wynd, on force ye mon
Bolyn, huke, haik, and scheld hold on.
Thairfor bewar with ane scharpe blawar:
Gif ye be wys avyce heiron;
And set your sale a little lawar.

"For gif ye hauld your sale ouir strek
Thair may cum bubbis ye not suspek; blasts
Thair may cum contrair ye not knaw;
Thair may cum stormes and causa lek
That ye man cap by wynd and waw." wave

He was an Ayrshire man, and had been in Denmark in 1469, in connection with the marriage of James III. He probably was often at Court, and had a pension of ten pounds. He died some time in 1504.

It is remarkable to find so many over whom the wave of entire oblivion has swept.

CHAPTER VII

JAMES I.

The return of James I. from England, where he had been in captivity for nineteen years, was the beginning of a new period of Scottish poetry, and the advent of a new spirit. It was a south wind that blew him home, and it seemed to blow into Scottish verse, waking flowers and perfumes hitherto undreamed of in the garden of song in our land. Love, allegory, pastoral, ballad, and satire began to stir in their sleeping. In James are to be found all the romance and sorrow which haunted the Stewart line of kings, the glory that flickered before them, the doom that clanked behind them, till the flame of them passed to darkness in Culloden.

1394-1437.

The life of James himself was chequered with sunshine and shadow, and ended in deepest tragedy. He was the younger son of Robert III., a weak, vacillating monarch in whose blood the mingled fire of the Bruce and the Stewart scarcely even smouldered. The throne sat insecurely amid a turbulent and war-like people, the nobles among whom could not be curbed, while the common people were ready to follow their leaders everywhere, and into any quarrel that had spoils in it. At last, glad to get rid of what had long been growing too hot and too heavy to carry, King Robert handed over the administration of his kingdom to his brother the Duke of Albany. The interpretation of the character of this statesman depends wholly upon point of view, and whether it be looked upon from within or without. Sir Walter Scott's sketch of him, however, in *The Fair Maid of Perth*, seems to express the generally received opinion that he was an unscrupulous scheming politician, with a single eye to the main chance. He was undoubtedly ambitious; and to such a nature, when there stood only the lives of the two young princes, the Duke of Rothesay and James himself,

the devil might easily suggest a crooked policy, crossed by duplicity and bloodshed.

Rothesay was easily reached on the charge of dissipation and extravagance, and he was thrown into Falkland Palace, whence he never emerged alive. Suspicion of foul play, that common haunter of so many graves in early history, whispered its dark suggestions around the gloomy cell in which a prince of the blood had died. Next, ostensibly in order to secure the safety of James, who was now in his eleventh year, arrangements were made to ship him to France, where, through that ancient friendship between the two countries, the memory of which is not yet forgotten, he might be educated in safety at the Court of Charles VI. He was conducted by Sir David Fleming of Cumbernauld to North Berwick, and, crossing to the Castle on the Bass, he waited there till a ship, with the Earl of Orkney and other nobles on board as his companions, took him off and sailed for England. It certainly looked not a little strange that his escort, on their return journey, were set upon, and their leader slain. Thinking men saw the identification thumb-mark of old Albany in this affray.

On 12th April 1406, at one o'clock, as he himself tells us in his poem,

> "Upon the waves weltering to and fro,"

off Flamborough Head, he was captured by an English ship of war, although the two countries were then at peace, and he was thrown into

> "strayte ward and in strong prisoun."

There seems little doubt that Albany had duly arranged this matter also.

The poor king, his father, pined away for sorrow, and after a dreary year drooped into the grave. Yet had he known the issue he would have learned that his son was safer in the hands of his country's enemies than sacrificed among the intrigues of his own ambitious relatives at home. He was, indeed, a potent hostage to the English king, as he could be used to checkmate any move by Albany to the detriment of England. Great care was taken of his education. Though a prisoner in the Tower, and at Nottingham Castle, and Windsor, he was ably and thoroughly trained in all the

polite learning, and in the graces and accomplishments of knightly chivalry of his time. Indeed, as Burton points out, had the King of England desired to train an able statesman for his own throne he could not have done more than he did for James. In his French wars Henry V. of England felt himself hampered by the valour of the Scottish soldiers opposed to him, and he endeavoured to utilize James to his own advantage by getting him to serve with the army in France in 1420-22. The young prince acquitted himself with valour, intrepidity, and skill; but the Scottish soldiers understood the position, and did not waver from allegiance to their French allies.

Meantime the old Duke of Albany died in 1419, and was succeeded by Murdoch, his son, a man without gifts of rule or graces of mind. The country, already suffering from anarchy and violence, sank into the depths of hopelessness—Might trampling heedlessly upon Right dethroned. Much that is unrecorded marched and counter-marched across this period. But perhaps the most notable were the dread battle of Harlaw, the martyrdom of Resby the Englishman, and the founding of the University of St Andrews. Down through Moray and Aberdeen had come the Lord of the Isles, with his cloud of fierce warriors, to vindicate some ancient shadowy claims in Buchan and Mar. He was met and opposed at Harlaw by Alexander Stewart, Earl of Mar, a somewhat remarkable figure, strangely taken by superficial summarizers as representative alike of non-Celtic and civilised culture. He himself had been a cateran, or little better. Son of the Wolf of Badenoch, he had by force married the widow of the Earl of Mar, had wrapped the law around him, covering thus a multitude of memories, had distinguished himself by knightly service, had fought in Flanders, and won recognition as a leader along the line of modern developments. He represented, here, those who wished in the north to progress along the way of trade and town life, as against those who clung to the older tradition of violence and feud. The men he led were, in the main, quite as Celtic as those they fought against, but the scheme they represented was the scheme of Teutonic culture, and the battle of Harlaw marked the triumph of that. The life and death grapple between the West and the East swung through a long day in July 1411; and when both armies drew apart at last, each

alike maimed and shattered, the coronach was cried on Benachie,

"And doun the Don an' a',"

for the multitude of brave men, the pride of the north, that lay dead along the blood-drenched ridge of the "red Harlaw." Resby was the first in that long line of seekers for truth who left their ashes as a testimony on the page of Scotland's religious history. The recognition of St Andrews University by the Pope in February 1414, was given on the king's own request out of his English imprisonment, which shows that the influence of James in his country's affairs was living and effectual even then.

The necessity for a university in Scotland had long been plainly seen. The Scots students were in constant evidence at Oxford and Cambridge, and especially in Paris, where in 1326 the Scots College was founded by the Bishop of Moray for the benefit, at first, of students from his diocese frequenting that city. Of twenty-one scholars at the close of the fourteenth century, comprised under the *English nation*, a title which included students from Germany, Scandinavia, and the British Isles, nine were Scotsmen, and these became, later on, bishops in their native land. Lectures had been delivered at St Andrews since the year 1410, four years before the Papal letter of privilege was brought to Scotland by Henry Ogilvy. The great Bishop Kennedy added to the influence of St Andrews by founding St Salvator's College there in 1456—a foundation which was confirmed by Pope Nicholas V., fresh privileges being conferred upon it by Pius II. in 1458, while Pope Paul II. in 1468 gave it the right to award degrees in theology and arts. St Leonard's College in 1512, and St Mary's new buildings in 1537, further established this seat of learning.

It is a coincidence worth noting that at the very time James was a prisoner in England, Charles of Orleans, the best French poet of the period, a man, too, of royal blood, who had been captured at Agincourt in 1415, was also enduring his twenty-five years' captivity.

The imprisonment of the Scottish prince gave him the beautiful inspiration for the poem which opened the door of Scottish verse to the advent of the songs of the heart; for the *Kingis Quair*, or *King's Book*, was written mostly

in England, though supplemented after his return, as it mentions his captivity past, and refers to his marriage.

The poem is a long one, with heathen myth and Christian allegory set in an atmosphere of delightful fancy; and the birds sing for the first time in Scotland in the branches of the Garden of Love.

According to his own account, when he had been a captive for nearly eighteen years he felt the burden of his imprisonment more than he could bear. Awakened at midnight, sleep forsakes his pillow, and he reads Boëthius's *Consolations of Philosophy* till his eyes grow weary. Then, as he tosses restlessly, the voice of the matin bell becomes, to his fancy, articulate, commanding him to write. But he feels like a poor ship in among the black rocks, without a quickening breeze within her sails. He tells of his capture, and the breath of the spring on the heaving waters blows among his verse. Then his sorrow for his own lot, while all the birds are singing, and all the creatures are glad in liberty, breaks forth. Under his window was a garden with green arbours and shaded lanes, and in the boughs sat the nightingale and sang

> "So loud and clere, the ympnis consecrat hymns
> Off lufis use, now soft, now lowd among,
> That all the gardyng and the wallis rong."

Suddenly, as he mourned, he saw in the garden close

> "The fairest or the freschest yonge floure,
> That ever I sawe, me thoght, before that houre,
> For quhich sodayn abate, anon astert
> The blude of all my body to my hert."

This fair flower that met his gaze from the prison lattice of his poem was the Lady Jane Beaufort, daughter of the Earl of Somerset, niece of the king, who became the source of his song, the angel of his liberation, and, finally, his queen beloved, until he lay, gashed by the knives of traitors, dead before her.

His romance goes on through an allegorical dream of a lover's pilgrimage from Venus to Minerva, who promises her aid, following the approved and established poetic methods of Chaucer and Gower, whom he deliberately

names as his models, and to whom he dedicates his verse, as his

> "maisteris dere
> Gowre and Chaucere, that on the steppis satt
> Of rethorike, quhill thai were lyvand here,
> Superlative as poetis laureate
> In moralitee and eloquence ornate,
> I recommend my buk, in lynis sevin,
> And eke thair saulis unto the blisse of hevin."

His "lynis sevin," or seven-lined metre, won a kingly distinction from having been used by him, for it passed on through later days as the "Rime Royal."

He has a voice and vision of his own, and the joy and sorrow of Nature are echoed from his heart with the conviction of one who had listened to them at first hand, and in her immediate presence.

His book is the earliest window opened in Scotland upon the culture of the world. The sound of the singing of France, Italy, and England floated through it into our land. It was like a rose in a field of thorns and stones. Doubtless it was considered peddling work in a realm of strife and strength, and the rough men of battle probably thought it was a moon-sick lover that had come back to be crowned in his own country, with his sweet wife beside him, in April 1424, ransomed from his English captivity for forty thousand pounds. They learned a different thing when they forced the poet-king to sit down to the telling of it.

He took time and looked around, beholding nothing but anarchy and misrule. The nobles had thrust themselves through the throne. Crown lands and money had been squandered or expropriated, and now were guarded with the bristling sword of both defiance and defence. He braced himself for the work that lay before him. He was no mere dreamer, but a man of vision, courage, and action. At his parliament in Perth he declared that authority, honesty, and virtue were no longer to be accounted as idle names, nor that considered right which the sword alone secured and held; and he recorded his immortal resolve that, if God spared him, though only the life of a dog were his reward, the key should keep the castle, and the bracken bush the cow, during his reign. He protected his people; he initiated the agency for the poor in the law courts; he set limits to the violence,

greed, and pride of the landed nobles ; he demanded production of charters and titles to what they held ; and for thirteen years Scotland enjoyed justice in a poet's reign. To find out the life of his subjects by a face-to-face scrutiny he moved amongst them in disguise, till the cultured poet and prince, whose manhood had developed at an English court, learned the meaning of the common rough life of the peasantry, understood the vernacular, and saw the sufferings and oppressions of his people.

His eagerness for reform, of course, dragged hate and revenge out of their lurking places to dog his heels. He sent Albany and his sons to death on the scaffold, and so ended that peril, at any rate. He crushed the insurrection of the Red Stewart of Dundonald, with Finlay the Bishop of Argyle. They fled the country and came back no more. His hand fell heavy on Highlands and Lowlands alike in the name of justice. At Inverness he caged the Lord of the Isles and fifty of his northern eagles. The island chief, liberated, forgot how grim could be the heart behind the hand of clemency, and after another rising was glad to come, half-naked, to the Chapel at Holyrood on Easter Sunday in 1429, and beg the pardon of the poet-king. It was given to him, but he was sent a humbled man to gnaw his finger-nails in the grey, wind-battered towers of gaunt Tantallon above the beating sea.

Two years later Donald Balloch swept down to Inverlochy, and trampled the royal army under Mar and Caithness like dust beneath his feet ; but James rushed to the west and quenched the fire of rebellion in the blood of three hundred noted caterans. With the same unswerving severity he shook his enemies out of their borderlands, even so great a lord as the Earl of March himself being dispossessed.

The Highlands were a sore handful to him. They were beyond the pale of law and of religion. Behind the hills the church lay helpless. Her prelates could not speak to the people in their own language. They only drew their revenues without a dream of duty ; while the law was a dotard, playing " blind man's buff " to the sport of the chiefs, who were all-powerful. There is a typical tale of a Highland thief to whom an old woman, impoverished by his rapacity, had declared that she would walk unshod until she had laid her complaint before the king. " We'll see to

that ! " said he, with a laugh, and he nailed iron horseshoes upon her. Her scarred feet aroused the flame of James's wrath. He broke into the fastnesses of the caterans, and the ruffian was dragged at a horse's tail to the gallows. Yet how many poor creatures were beyond the reach of that powerful arm's redress !

Under the throne there now began to flow secret streams and currents of sedition. The thunder was gathering in the hills. You hear undertones of it in Acts by the king, forbidding leagues among the subjects of the realm, and counting it sedition to propagate lies between the king and people. In the Parliament of 1435 Sir Robert Graham, the mouthpiece of the malcontents, after a speech overflowing with treason, is said to have actually laid hands upon James. He was banished, and his possessions declared forfeit to the Crown, but he fled beyond the passes, which could be barred effectually, even against kings, by a few strong hearts. He drew old Walter Stewart of Atholl, the king's own uncle, into the plot, dangling the crown itself, as incentive, before his eyes; and so the tragedy ripened.

Returning from Roxburgh, which he had been besieging, and where mysteriously, after a visit from the queen, almost at the moment of success, he disbanded his army, James resolved to spend Christmas in Perth. As he rode north he was confronted by a Highland prophetess, and warned against crossing the Forth, but he still pushed on.

In the Blackfriars' Monastery, with the queen and court, he spent a happy season; but there was treachery within and without. The wireless telegraphy of treason was in active operation. Three hundred men, with war in their nostrils as the joy of life, were drawing near, and the vengeful Graham was at their head. It was the evening of 20th February 1437, and it was spent with singing, piping, harping, chess, and telling of tales. Again the weird Highland prophet wife, who had followed the king, enters on the scene. This wild figure of a loving peasant woman, who probably had heard of the schemes against the life of her monarch, who had protected her and the poor like her, followed him, forced her way even to the door of his chamber, but was rebuffed by the usher, passing out at last with words of dreadful meaning. And at midnight armed men broke in upon him. The locks were found to have been removed. Brave Catherine Douglas

thrust her fair arm through the empty hasps, only to fall back maimed, and to bear the name, until she died, of "Kate Barlass." The place beneath the floor where he had hid was discovered, and he was left lying dead with twenty-eight gaping wounds crying, red-lipped, for justice; his fair queen, whose love had given him life, bearing herself two scars which she had won for the sake of him who, in undying verse, had made her name immortal. They had not long to wait. Ere forty days passed, dragged from their places of retreat, the murderers were mercilessly slain, with every mark of a people's execration and the vengefulness of a woman's wounded love.

The Kingis Quair was probably begun to beguile his captivity, but with a shadowy, autobiographical purpose before him. The vagueness of his design is evident throughout. The poem ends with "quod Jacobus primus Scotorum rex illustrissimus."

It is quite apparent that the writer of *The Kingis Quair* was acquainted with the *Romaunt of the Rose*, and especially as that poem is presented in Chaucer's version of it. He was, as Professor Schick pointed out, familiar with, and much indebted to, Lydgate's *Temple of Glass*. But the influence of Chaucer is directly reflected from word, phrase, and allusion. In fact the author of this poem was familiar with the existing literature of his art.

In 1896 Mr J. T. T. Brown impugned the traditional royal authorship, trying to show that *The Kingis Quair* belonged to a group of Scottish poems written between 1440 and 1480; and he connected it with *The Court of Love*, showing that if the author of *The Kingis Quair* were indebted to that poem, its connection with King James I. was impossible. But if there be indebtedness it must be the other way, for *The Court of Love* is an English pseudo-Chaucerian poem, prompted into existence not earlier than 1531, while the manuscript of *The Kingis Quair*, which is evidently a transcription of an older one, is, at least, forty years earlier. Both, however, owe debts to the same poetic creditor, namely, Lydgate. A point has been attempted against the royal authorship, from the fact that in the same manuscript a miscellany of verse includes a poem, *The Quair of Jelusy*, attributed to James Auchinleck, and the dialect of both poems has been asserted to be

similar. But, as Skeat points out, a linguistic and grammatical comparison brings quite closely together *The Quair of Jelusy* and *Lancelot of the Laik*, but separates from these *The Kingis Quair*. Further, the spirit, feeling, and character of the last named lifts it far away from the others, into a finer atmosphere of poesy and art, supporting the traditional estimate of its royal author. The result has been a very good edition of *The Quair of Jelusy* by Professor Lawson of St Andrews, but the matter remains where tradition left it.

The first theme of the book is the fickleness of Fortune.

> "In tender youth how scho was first my fo
> And eft my frende."

The second is the happiness of love.

The poet tuned his instrument to the music of Chaucer, although it is carrying comparison too far to suggest that he owed the two exquisite lines

> "For quhich sodain abate, anon astert,
> The blude of all my body to my hert,"

to the lines from the *Knight's Tale*:

> "And here-with-al he bleynte and cryde ah!
> As though stongen he were unto the hert."

Arguments like this differ very little in quality from that regarding the river in Macedonia and the river in Wales!

But yet it may be said that more than once, if he do take a string from Chaucer's instrument, he makes it ring to better music than his master. The poem is a most clear and avowed imitation of Chaucer, yet everywhere it speaks with the voice of the author's own individuality. The later verses of Henryson, Dunbar, and Douglas have still the same inspiration, but they are much more removed from the old basis of "art for art's sake," and have become the mouthpiece of individual feeling and opinion.

The attempt to displace James from the position of authorship of *The Kingis Quair* accorded to him by tradition has had no effect. The continual ascription to the royal poet remains unshaken. The poem has come down in only one manuscript, in the Bodleian Library, attributed to the latter part of the fifteenth century. It is contained in a

miscellaneous collection marked "Arch. Selden, B. 24," and is prefaced by a note:

"Maid be King James of Scotland the first, callit the kingis quair, and Maid quhen his Maiestie Wes In Ingland."

The same may be said of the method of argument which attempts to deprive him of the traditional authorship of *Peblis to the Play* and *Christis Kirk on the Grene.* It was not uncommon, as may be seen from the writings of Henryson, Dunbar, and Douglas, to have acquaintance with a muse that skips and romps and laughs among the peasantry, as well as one that loved to sit and dream upon the heights. An argument might be put forward on *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, *Tam o' Shanter*, and *The Jolly Beggars*, being necessarily by different hands, the vocabulary and the style of the one being so very different from those of the others. Bishop Percy and Ritson both attribute *Christis Kirk on the Grene* to James V. Skeat considers the tradition to be traceable to error in transcription, writing "First" for "Fift." This was very natural, as James V. loved so much to move amongst the peasantry, slipping out of Stirling Castle by the narrow track called Ballangeich, and frequently spending nights in the homes of the peasantry as a "gaberlunzie man." This, however, was a custom common to the Stewart kings, and is attributed to James I. also. Boece, in his history of Scotland, refers to it:

"Mutata vesta velut privatum inter privatos ac maxime inter mercatores, quod aliorum aedes non ita cuivis expositae essent, sese immiscuit."

This he would be all the more inclined to do from his long absence from his native country, and his strong desire to get at the root of the life of his people. Doubtless many a tale of oppression, and many a scene of poverty and distress, must have become familiar to him thus.

Judgment from style alone is sometimes as prone to error as the decision of an expert in handwriting in a court of law, a critic being apt to find so much that he carries on his own spectacles to the examination.

To those who do not bring to the criticism a preconceived theory, it is almost clear that both *Peblis to the Play* and

Christis Kirk on the Grene are the product of one mind's appreciation of the humours of such gatherings as they describe.

In *Bannatyne's Collection*, which was made in the year 1568, *Peblis to the Play* seems to be clearly written down as having been composed by James I., and although more than a century elapsed between the death of James I. and the writing of that manuscript, this might be taken as representing a continuous tradition. Anyhow, one must remember the reputation of James I. as a voluminous poet, and only such experience as legend attributed to him could have given him the insight into the life and manners of the people reflected in these verses. *Peblis to the Play* commences with the very words which Major mentions in his *History* :

"At Beltayn,"

and although it may be argued that a later poet might begin an imitation with the same phrase, there seems to be a stronger argument, or one as strong at any rate, in favour of the reliability of tradition.

The belief that James composed many of the old melodies of Scotland may, of course, also be true, as any poet's test of his song is that it sings, and James would not be the only verse-writer who crooned his lines; while some of the Stewart kings were notable dilettanti.

It is quite clear that Major believed that James I. wrote *Peblis to the Play*, and although, as Mair says, parodies had been made by poets at Dalkeith and at Gargeil—wherever that may be—there is far more than a probability that the king's ballad would survive the imitations of it. There is proof positive from his letters that James I. knew the dialect of his people, and the fact that Major, in 1518, attributed the poem *Peblis to the Play* to the king who had died in 1437, seems at any rate to show that the poem was not written in the sixteenth century. Major was born in 1469, and he must have had intelligent memory before the time when he was writing in 1518. The ballad must have been familiar to him from his youth up; and in 1518 James V. was only five years old.

The slip at another place in Bannatyne's manuscript, confusing James IV. with James V., has not the weight which has been attributed to it, for it is easy to make an

error in regard to two kings who immediately succeeded one another, but not so easy to confuse monarchs between whom stretches a whole wide century of time.

The tradition that *Christis Kirk on the Grene* was written by James V. is of later date, originating with Dempster in 1587. It is, at any rate, certain, from Major's reference, that *Christis Kirk on the Grene*, if by the same hand as *At Beltayn*, was not composed by James V. Indeed, Major's statement is confirmed by the Bannatyne manuscript, for he says that the humorous *At Beltayn* was written by King James I., while the Bannatyne manuscript lays *Christis Kirk on the Grene* at the foot of the same author, and both of them are in the same rollicking vein, with the same characteristics of outlook and style.

Professor Skeat comes to the conclusion that *Christis Kirk on the Grene* belongs to the reign of James V., because in David Lyndsay's poetry there are expressions exactly the same as those used in the other poem. Thus in the former you read :

"His lymmis were lyk twa rokkis,"

and the opponents run on one another

"lyk rammis."

Lyndsay uses the same phrases ; yet this by no means proves, unless one is possessed of a theory which he must push through at any cost, that the poems belong to the same period. There are stock phrases and stock similes which are repeated age after age, and it certainly seems more likely that Lyndsay, in his comical verse, was reproducing, perhaps unconsciously, but just as likely otherwise, the humorous images of the older and better known poem. If a parliamentary speaker or an ethical writer of to-day makes the statement that "our days pass as a weaver's shuttle," or that he is as solitary "as a pelican on the house-tops," it would not prove that the Bible was not a popular work long before his day, but rather that he was quoting from established and familiar authority.

What is the evidence, then, against the authorship of James I. ? Mainly that the style of *Christis Kirk on the Grene* seems so alien to the style of "the moral and sententious James." We have seen already that a poet is not confined

to uttering himself in one mood. Tom Hood might, on this account, be proved to be twins; the serious or the comical poems of Dunbar might be separated from their authorship. Is it necessary to apologise for the creation of Shakespeare's clowns, or must Bacon be accepted as the author of Hamlet's soliloquy, in order to explain the apparent duality of a great poet?

Even the question of dialect is open to debate, for ballads such as these may have been floating amongst the peasantry, and undergone a change corresponding to the change of dialect used by these. No one pretends that it is the autograph of the author which has been preserved, and even a copyist imparts his personality to his copy. When ancient ballads are written down for the first time from the lips of an aged raconteur, they are written down in the phrase which that individual understands, and not in their archaic form. The person who wrote down the ballad would almost certainly use the grammatical form and spelling of his own period.

Then, again, Professor Skeat acknowledges 1450 as the incontestable date when the rollicking metre in which this poem was written may be found, whereas James died in 1437. But this does not disprove the existence of unnoted examples within twenty-five years preceding. All the floating poetry of a period does not survive, and the metre of these contested poems is just the most natural for singing and chanting. Furthermore, we have on record names of poems and songs not a line of which has come down to us, so that we cannot make this kind of thing a test. Besides, the very form of them became at once the model for later verse, and in Burns became classical. It is a remarkable thing how often tradition is unerring, and it ought to carry at any rate as much weight as the theoretical lucubrations of critics whose date is five hundred years later than the poems discussed by them. It is at least noteworthy that in 1444 a foundation was made providing, among other objects, for prayers for the soul of the murdered king in the Parish Kirk of Peebles.

As a monarch, the influence of James for civilization was felt all along the years in Scotland. As a musician his repute remains, and as a poet of the tender affections his fame can never die.

The king's book abides, a royal monument of the royal love of a most kingly spirit. Sweet, tender, and pure, it paints the heart's fond longings, and the dawn of love, in colours all its own; and no poet's music ever sang more sweetly the awe and loveliness of womanhood.

CHAPTER VIII

HENRYSON AND DUNBAR

Robert Henryson stands with a foot in both centuries. He is known to have been master of the Benedictine Abbey School in Dunfermline, as that designation appears in the title-page of his *Fables* printed in 1570, and again on the title-page of his *Testament of Cresseid* printed in 1593, though upon what authority this was done is not known. He appears also as witness to certain deeds in 1477, and in 1478, as "Robert Henrison, notarius publicus." One cannot help wondering who was the "John Henryson" that in 1573 was master in the same school. We see no trace of the poet in the political life of his time; but, doubtless, echoes of its thunder reached him, and the boom of desolating billows fell upon his heart with saddening meanings as he lingered in the Abbey Close. *c.* 1425-1506.

He was dead in 1508, for Dunbar in his *Lament for the Makkars*, says:

> "In Dunfermelyne he has done roune (just whispered)
> With gud Maister Robert Henrisoun."

Kynaston, in 1635, in his Latin version of *Troilus and Cryseyde*, which had been attributed to Chaucer, mentioned that it was written by the "sometime chiefe schoolmaster in Dunfermelyne," and that in extreme old age he had "dyed of a fluxe." St Andrews University contains no record of him, and the University of Glasgow was not in existence till 1451, when Bishop Turnbull founded it. The birth and family of the poet are alike unknown. His degree of Master of Arts was evidently not Scottish, and was probably of Louvaine or Paris. He must have been one of Scotland's wandering scholars before he came back and settled in his native land. He was, however, admitted "ad eundem" into

Glasgow University in 1462, when he was styled "the venerable Master Robert Henryson, Licentiate in Arts and Bachelor in Decrees."

He is supposed to have been born about 1425. He was therefore but a boy when the poet-king was cruelly done to death in Perth, and he lived through the reigns of James II. and James III., the period of sorest stress in the history of that storm-driven Stewart dynasty.

He had a fluent mastery of various measures, and in *Sum Practysis of Medecyne* he uses the old alliteration. The influence of Chaucer is powerfully manifested in his work. Indeed, *The Testament of Cresseid* by Henryson is a sequel to the English poet's *Troilus and Cryseyde*, with an attempt to introduce poetic justice. So well did Henryson's work fit into the story that in the editions of the English poet after 1532 it was included, without the author's name, until, as we have seen, the Scottish authorship was acknowledged in 1635 by Sir Francis Kynaston, in his Latin translation. It was even quoted as Chaucer's by such authorities as Strutt and Douce.

The fair Cresseid, in punishment of her treason to true love, is smitten with leprosy, and departs to a lazarhouse. Leprosy in the Middle Ages was the scourge of Europe, creeping not only through the hovels of the poor, but also into the palaces of kings. It slew Bruce of Scotland and Henry IV. of England. The wretched victims usually begged through the streets, with their cup to receive alms, and their clapper with which to warn passers-by of risk of contact. In Henryson's poem, while Troilus is returning in the elation of victory, he and his company are accosted for charity by a band of those miserable outcasts, and as his glance falls upon Cresseid's face amongst them, although he does not recognise her, yet his soul remembers with love her who once was dear to him.

"Than upon him scho kest up baith her ene,
And with ane blenk it come into his thocht
That he sumtime hir face befoir had sene,
plight Bot scho was in sic plye he knew her nocht;
. . . . . .
"Ane spark of lufe than till his hart culd spring.
And kendlet all his bodie in ane fyre;
. . . . . .

"For knightly pity and memorial
Of fair Cresseid ane girdle did he tak,
Ane purse of gold and many gay jewel,
And in the skirt of Cresseid, doun gan swak, throw
Then rade away and not ane word he spak,
Pensive in heart."

When Cresseid hears the name of him whom her sorrows had so moved she was pierced through with bitter pain, even unto death.

A quaint humour sometimes plays upon Henryson's page, and helps out most vivid portraiture in strange grotesqueness, as in the picture of Saturn:

"His face frosnit, his lyre was lyke the leid, flesh
His teith chatterit, and cheverit with the chin shivered
His ene drowpit, how, sonkin in his heid, hollow
Out of his nois the meldrop fast can rin,
blue With lippis bla, and cheikis leine and thin,
The iceschoklis that fra is hair doun hand,
Was wonder greit, and as ane speir als lang."

His *Robene and Makyne* is a perfect pastoral. It was the poetical predecessor of Burn's *Duncan Gray*, so pawkie, so clever, and so quaint.

"Robene sat on gud grene hill,
Kepand a flok of fe; sheep
Mirry Makyne said him till,
'Robene, thow rew on me;
I haif the luvit lowd and still,
Thir yeiris two or thre;
My dule in dern bot gif thow dill, my secret grief unless
Dowtless but dreid I de.' [thou pity

"Robene ansuerit, 'be the rude,
Nathing of lufe I knaw,
Bot keipis my scheip undir yone wid,
Lo quhair thay raik on raw:
Quhat has marrit the in thy mude,
Makyne, to me thow schaw;
Or quhat is lufe, or to be lude?
Fane wald I leir that law.'" learn

He cannot be troubled, this practical shepherd, with love, and he is more interested in his sheep than in Makyne.

Nothing can exceed the rebuff of the churl's heart. Still she pleads:

"'Robene I stand in sic a styll;
sigh I sicht, and that full sair.'
'Makyne, I haif bene here this quhyle;
At hame, god gif I wair.'
'My huny, Robene, talk ane quhill,
Gif thow will do na mair.'
'Makyne, sum uthir man begyle,
For hamewart I will fair.'"

So off he goes—heartless one! Poor Makyne is consumed with love, but vainly pleads her case. Cupid, however, turns the tables, and has his revenge. Unknowingly, Robene carries love's arrow in his heart. It rankles in his bosom, and he returns to plead. Yet while Makyne has learned to sing and laugh Robene can only sigh, and no pleading of his can win her heart again. Makyne has paid with pain for her lesson in the humours and whims of men. Her answer is:

"'Robene, thow hes hard soung and say,
In gestis and storeis auld,
The man that will nocht quhen he may
Sall haif nocht quhen he wald.'"

And though the poet made her say it in scorn, there is yet pathetic truth in her words!

"'Robene, that warld is all away,
And quyt brocht till ane end;
And nevir agane thairto, perfay,
Sall it be as thow wend.'
thought

"Makyne went hame blyth anewche
Attour the holtiis hair.
hoary woods
Robene murnit, and Makyne lewche;
Scho sang, he sichit sair;
And so left him bayth wo and wreuch,
wretched
In dolour and in cair,
Kepand his hird under a huche
Among the holtiis hair."

In his *Garmond of Gud Ladyes* he weaves an allegory of the excellences of womanhood thus:

"Hir belt suld be of benignitie,
About hir middill meit;
Hir mantill of humilitie,
endure To tholl bayth wind and weit.

"Hir hat suld be of fair having,
And hir tepat of trewth, tippet
ruff Hir patelet of gude pansing, thinking
neck-ribbon Hir hals-ribbane of rewth. pity

"Hir slevis suld be of esperance, hope
To keip hir fra dispair ;
Hir gluvis of the gud govirnance,
To hyd hir fyngearis fair.

"Hir schone suld be of sickernes, sureness
In syne that scho nocht slyd ;
Hir hois of honestie, I ges,
I suld for hir provyd.

"Wald scho put on this garmond gay, garment
I durst sweir by my seill, soul
That she woir nevir grene nor gray
That set her half so weill."

The *Bludy Serk* is a morality ballad suggested by the *Gesta Romanorum*. A prince dies for the sake of a fair lady's liberation, which he achieves at cost of his life, and he bequeathes to her his shirt, stained with the blood he shed on her behalf, bidding her look on it when any wooer comes to her feet. The morality is that she is man's soul, the knight is the Redeemer, and the only strength in time of trial comes from remembrance of the wounds of Christ.

His reflective poems are *The Abbay Walk* and the *Prais of Age*, the former being a ballade in proper form.

"Thy kindome and thy grit empyr,
Thy ryaltie, nor riche array,
Sall nocht endeur at thy desyre,
Bot as the wind, will wend away ;
Thy gold, and all thy gudis gay,
Quhen fortoun list, will fra the fall.
Sen thou sic sampillis seis ilk day,
Obey, and thank thy God for all."

His *Prais of Age* reflects the solemnity of a quiet life's thought, moved into utterance by the gloom of his time. He sums up his reflections thus :

"This wrechit warld may na man trow ; for quhy? trust
Of erdly joy ay sorrow is the end ;
The gloyr of it can na man certify,
This day a king, the morne na-thing to spend !
Quhat haif we heyr bot grace us to defend !
The quhilk God grant us till amend our myss,
That till his joy he may our saullis send ;
The moyr of aige the nerar hevynnis bliss."

One feels, somehow, that he is giving a picture of his own day in the sad stanza :

"Fals is this warld, and full of varyance,
Oureset with syt and uther synnys mo ; care
Now trewth is tynt, gyle hes the gouernance,
And wrachitness hes turnyt al fra weill to wo ;
Fredoume is tynt, and flemyt the Lordis fro. banished
And cuvattyce is all the cause of this ;
I am content that yowthheid is ago ; gone
The moyr of aige the nerar hevynnis blis."

The same undertone of sadness which breathes the spirit of Ecclesiastes runs through the *Ressoning betwixt Aige and Youth* and the *Ressoning betwixt Deith and Man.* Youth comes singing,

"O yowth be glaid into thy flowris grene !"

but too soon the refrain is :

"O yowth thy flowris faidis ferly sone !" strangely soon

and these two axioms of his philosophy he does not try to reconcile, but leaves them side by side as facts of life.

His *Orpheus and Eurydice* is his least poetic production, as the heart of it can hardly beat for the load of learning laid upon it.

He reveals in all his works a charming personality moving through a still atmosphere of musical thought. In his poems the true man speaks beautifully, shadows running over the sunny gold of his humour, like the wind across the wheat.

His *Fables* are extremely characteristic. In these he is a good schoolmaster, teaching the best lessons of life by illustrations of the characteristics of his own day, which he noted with an open eye and a pawkie humour. The best known is, of course, the *Uplandis Mous and the Burgess Mous*, suggested from the classics. The description of the two gives a side glimpse of the life of his time.

"This rurall mous in to the wynter tyde,
Had hunger, cauld, and tholit greit distress ;
The uther mous that in the burgh can byde,
Wes gild-brother and maid ane free burgess ;
also Tol fre als, but custum mair or less, without tax
And fredome had to ga quhair ever scho list,
Among the cheis in cask, and meill in kist."

He repeats the old argument that for peace of mind the country life, far from the distractions and distresses of crowded places, is, above all things, to be preferred. One feels as if one were looking in at a window, beholding this quiet soul settling down to read :

> "I mend the fyre, and beikit me about,
> Than tuik ane drink my spreitis to comfort."

When he moves out of his retirement he loves to go

> "Unto the wod to se the flouris spring . . .
> And heir the maveis sing."

He then passes further afield, and observes with his quiet eye the work of the toilers.

> "Sum makand dyke, and sum the pleuch can wynd,
> Sum sawand seidis fast, from place to place,
> The harrowis hoppand in the saweris trace : sower's
> It wes greit joy to him that luifit corne,
> To se thame laubour, baith at evin and morne."

He has a keen outlook upon Nature, and the art of painting a picture.

> "Sweet wes the smell of flouris quhyte and reid,
> The joyis of birdis richt delitious,
> The bewis braid blomit abone my heid,
> The ground grawand with gersis gratious ; grasses
> Of all plesance that place wes plenteous
> With sweit odouris, and birdis harmonie,
> The morning myld, my mirth wes mair firthy." strong

In such matters he observes for himself. His pictures have not the conventional touch, and he stands forth as a great poet with the three graces that mark out such an one always —namely, humour, truth, and interpretation.

It was a life unstirred by passion, far from the din and ambition of courts, that this poet lived, within sound of the abbey bell ; and as fancy looks in at the window of his school we can behold him dreaming of the green knolls, and the sheep, and the whims of rustic lovers, while the monks chant their orisons in the cloisters near, and the boys hum their Latin, which was the key to all the wisdom of their world.

Quite another kind of poet was William Dunbar, who

brought into Scottish verse the characteristic humour of the Scot. A churchman and a courtier, yet with a sarcastic appreciation of courtiers and of churchmen, and a sneer for himself as both—with a Scottish gleam in his face, and yet, withal, the tooth of a keen regret gnawing within him. For his fortunes and his genius he has justly been styled the Scottish Horace. He was decidedly the most brilliant poet of mediæval Scotland, and is only excelled for variety and electric utterance by Burns himself. There is a devilishness of genius about this man.

c. 1460-1530.

He must have been one of the most familiar figures at the court of James IV., in the latter part of that monarch's reign; yet his name does not occur in public records until he was apparently about forty years old, when, in August 1500, ten pounds of the king's money was paid to "Maister William Dunbar for all the dayis of his life," or until he be promoted by his sovereign lord to a benefice of the value of forty pounds or more yearly.

What he was like we do not know. If in his mirth he was a clerkly Falstaff, with rubicund face, his soul grew lean from repining, he gradually lost the light of hope, and there was the bitterness of unshed tears in his heart before he died. Yet, somehow, from his own verse we seem to see him—a man with the dust of many highways and byways upon him, and wisdom gathered in queer places and under many skies from an unending search after that flower of knowledge, the root of whose bitterness lies near the world's end. Out of the cloak of the dark unknown he peers with twinkling eye, and, if we do not see him, we can hear, even from his hiding-place, the sigh of his sorrow over hope deferred.

There are few details of Dunbar's life. It is not known where he was born. It is not known to what family he belonged, though he claimed to be of the Dunbars of East Lothian, of the race of Gospatrick, the first earl. Possibly he was of that blood, though perhaps a shadow lay across his origin, as in the famous *Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy* the latter taunts him with being misbegotten or illegitimate. It may have been his connection, however indirect, with this notable family, that gave him entry to the court. It is remarkable, however, that even in his poorest period he makes no appeal to the Earl of Dunbar. Born about 1460, evidently a man of the Lothians, his origin, his family, and

the place of his grave are as untraceable as the lightning that is past. He studied at St Andrews, where he took his degree in 1477; and, entering the Franciscan Order of Greyfriars, he preached, according to his own account, betwixt Berwick and Calais, and on through Picardy. He admits many a wile which even holy water could not wash. But he gave up his preaching, and came to the Scottish court, though in what capacity he served there is not fully known. We gather that he learned, like many another,

> "How savoureth of salt, the bread of others;
> And what a wearisome thing indeed it is
> The climbing up and down another's stairs."

For he lived all his life hoping, and he died with the hunger for preferment unsatisfied.

Dunbar was evidently much used by the king on foreign embassies. In 1491 he resided in Paris, and he was in London in the negotiations for the royal marriage, in connection with which he wrote his immortal *Thrissel and the Rois*, which is modelled on the *Kingis Quair*, rich in colour and music, and with so noble a vision of womanhood as secured to the poet the lasting friendship of the king. His pension was increased to eighty pounds, and he lived in terms of closest intimacy with the king and queen; but he never got the preferment which he longed for. Vainly did he remind James in satire and in petition how he had been employed in England and France, Ireland, Germany, and Spain. His eyes ceased to flash merrily, his heart learned sadder measures, and moved to the most solemn music. The last payment he received from James was in April 1513, five months before the fortunes and misfortunes of the king and of his country fell together on Flodden's fatal field. He is lost in the dense blackness of the cloud that followed thereafter, and whether he died beside his monarch on that grief-crowned hill, or lingered on in some quiet place of prayer till grey death folded him in silence, no man can tell for certain. He looked from saddened windows at the close; and disappointment till the end kept step with him, hooded and cowled.

He had the true Scottish humour, which has sarcasm in the core of it, like a breath of autumn with biting frost behind it. He opened the way for this stream to flow down to Burns, "the scorn of scorns, the hate of hates,"

and the laugh of a dying man in them! He was, unwittingly on Burns's part, that poet's poetic ancestor in many ways and moods.

He knew the world and the heart of man. He had learned its way with bleeding feet and tired heart many a day. The thorny hedge of criticism had given him wounds; the slamming doors of pride's rebuff had often shut in the face of his pleading. But the hard flint of the world struck flame from the poet's soul, and he cried out the meaning of things as he had seen them. Thus, in an appeal to the king, he says:

"This waverand warldis wretchidness,
The failzeand and fruitless bissines,
The mispent tyme, the service vane,
For to considder is ane pane.

"The sugurit mouthis, with myndis therfra,
The figurit speiche, with faceis tua,
The plesand toungis, with hartis unplane,
For to considder is ane pane."

How, with a trembling lip, he comforts himself!

"Had I for warldis unkyndness
In hairt tane ony haviness,
Or fro my plesans bene opprest,
I had bene deid langsyne, dowtless;
For to be blyth me think it best."

He looks round him and sees the ranks of the poets of the country thinned by death, and only the sad shadows left of vanishing names, and so, heartsick, he writes the *Lament for the Makkaris* with the weird refrain:

"*Timor Mortis conturbat me.*"

which makes me always feel as if I were in a dim aisle, around which a moorland wind is sweeping, and see a band of mourning figures chanting their dirge above a dead man's face. All the triumphs of resistless death are told. Even the masters of eternal song are slain by him.

"He taikis the campioun in the stour,
The captane closit in the tour,
The lady in bour full of bewtie;
Timor Mortis conturbat me.

"I se that makkaris amang the laif
pageant. Playis heir thair padyanis, syne gois to graif;
Sparit is nocht thair facultie;
Timor Mortis conturbat me."

The Golden Targe is a simple May morning's dream of the poet's appearance at the court of Love, where he vainly employs the shield of Reason to defend himself against the arrows of Beauty's queen. He is wounded, made captive, and delivered over to Heaviness, while Venus sails away. But just then the noise of guns awakes him to the merry morning and the song of birds, and he, following the habit of his fellows in the poetic art, lays his tribute at the feet of the masters of rhetoric, paying especial tribute for their aureate terms and bequest of rich poetic phrase.

"O, reverend Chauser, ross of rethouris all,
As in our toung ane flour imperiall,
That raiss in Britane evir, quha reidis richt,
Thow beiris of makaris the tryvmph royall;
Thy fresch ennammallit termes celestiall
This mater cowth hafe illuminit full bricht,
Was thow nocht of our Inglis all the licht,
Surmonting every toung terrestriall,
As far as Mayis morrow dois midnycht?

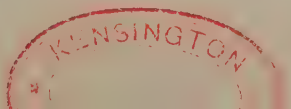
"O, morale Goweir, and Lidgait laureat,
Zour suggarat toungis, and lippis aureat,
Bene till our eiris cause of grit delyte:
Zour angelic mowth most mellifluat,
Our rude langage hes cleir illumynat,
And fair ourgilt our speiche, that imperfyte
Stude, or zour goldin pennis schup to wryt;
This yle befoir wes bair, and dissolat
Of rethorik, or lusty fresche indyte."

It is in his weird sarcastic humour that we find him in his *Dance of the Sevin Deidly Synnis*. With the most grim hand he draws aside the curtain of hell itself, where the fiend summons the accursed to their dance on the very eve of Lent. The Seven Deadly Sins lead off, and in describing them the humour is sarcastic even to the terrible. Harlots enter—but hell is silent. Priests come into the arena, and all hell rocks with laughter.

Pride led the way;

"Than Yre come in with sturt and stryfe;
His hand wes ay upoun his knyfe."

He was followed by boasters, braggers, and quarrelling



spirits, some of whom thrust at one another, and some stabbed their neighbour

"To the heft,
With knyvis that scherp cowd scheir."

Next Envy followed—

"Fild full of feid and fellony,
Hid malyce and dispyte;
Ffor pryvie hatrent that tratour trymlit. hatred
Him followit mony freik dissymlit,
With fenzeit wirdis quhyte;
And flattereris in to menis facis
And bakbytaris in secreit placis,
lie To ley that had delyte."

Then Covetousness entered with a train of usurers and menial sneaks for money, from whose throats poured molten gold; but the fiends filled them again with red-hot coin for punishment and sport.

"Syne Sweirnes, at the secound bidding, stubbornness
Come lyk a sow out of a midding."

The slothful, the sleepy drabs of hell, followed him, and the fiends lashed them to the dance.

"In dance thay war so slaw of feit,
Thay gaif thame in the fyre a heit
And maid thame quicker of counzie." coin

Next Lust, breathless, like a corpse, led on by Idleness and all that had already been dead in sin. Then the foul master Gluttony, and in his train all drunkards and greedy kites.

"Drynk! ay thay cryit, with many a gaip,
The feyndis gaif thame hait leid to laip," lap

as their reward in hell.

To this weird dance—

minstrels "Na menstrallis playit to thame but dowt,
Ffor glemen thair wer haldin owt,
Be day, and eik by nycht;
Except a menstrall that slew a man,
Swa till his heretage he wan,
And entirt be breif of richt."

This, for sarcastic damnation of the mean, greedy, lying, and foul side of human nature is unequalled in literature in

its absolute dreadfulness. I know no sermon on sin, no sarcasm on life anywhere that pierces the soul so bitterly. In one lurid scene it gathers Dunbar's summary of things—the decision of a man into whose soul the iron had entered, and over whose closing days, after the cloud of Flodden Field's disaster, a dead, dark silence settles.

Alongside of rich verse illuminated by excelling genius, one can forget so much that is evil, because the beauty, the pathos, and the deep earnestness of his more serious work make one regret that he had not been born in a later age of greater refinement and purity.

Kennedy, in the *Flyting*, flings at Dunbar the epithet of "Lollard," that is to say, "Protestant"—as one in a Catholic country would fling the word "heretic" as a term of opprobrium. Yet in his poems the only semi-justification for such a charge lies in the fact that Dunbar very freely scourges the monks for their vices. He had soon set out upon the world's highway as a begging friar, and it was apparently his lot to have had eye-opening experience as such. Of this episode in his life, Kennedy takes ample advantage, designating him "A Knycht of the Felde"—that is to say, a robber or highwayman. The vagrant friars of his period undoubtedly fell in with strange bed-fellows; and the vow of celibacy was probably also lightly enough remembered. In his *Flyting* Dunbar himself mentions adventures at sea:

> "By Holland, Seland, Zetland, and Northway coist,
> In sey desert quhill we wer famist aw;
> Zit come I hame, fals baird, to lay thy boist."

He mentions the royal business he had shared in, in France and elsewhere. We know he was in London with the Earl of Bothwell, the Bishop of Glasgow, and their train, when the marriage between James IV. and the Princess Margaret was arranged; for payments are recorded to "The Rymer of Scotland," undoubtedly Dunbar. It was, as we have seen, for the consummation of this marriage that he wrote *The Thrissill and the Rois*, the finest wedding song in our Scottish poetry.

His taking of priest's orders, which is proved by his receiving a gift from the king for his first mass, toned down his utterance considerably, though disappointment also may have been making him more grave.

If he survived Flodden, then the poems of consolation addressed to the queen dowager, which are extant, could have been written by none other than Dunbar; if not, they are, at any rate, extremely close imitations of his style.

His poetic power was recognised by Crabbe and Sir Walter Scott, but until Allan Ramsay published a selection of his work, silence and forgetfulness had fallen over him.

Dunbar did not speak of himself as a "Scottish" poet, because in his day Scottish signified the Gaelic language.

He was on very intimate terms with the queen; in fact, some of the poems addressed to her pain us with the plainness of their speech.

The Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo startles one at first, till we remember how far we have moved from such a period. The prologue, however, is extremely beautiful.

"Apon the Midsummer ewin, mirriest of nichtis,
I muvit furth allane, neir as midnicht wes past,
Besyd ane gudlie grein garth, full of gay flouris,
hedged Hegeit, or ane huge hicht, with hawthorne treis;
Quhairon ane bird, on ane bransche, so birst our hir notis
That neuer ane blythfullar bird was on the beuche hard;
Quhat throw the sugarat sound of hir sang glaid,
And throw the savour sanatiue of the sueit flouris,
I drew in derne to the dyk to dirkin efter mirthis; listen
The dew donkit the daill, and dynnit the feulis."

The rest of the poem is by no means clean. The whole tone is disappointment in the pursuit of the pleasures of sense.

The earlier poems are full of directest reference to matters not now spoken of, but his power of making comical words in collocation is often seen in these.

The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy is full of much that never would be written or read to-day. Walter Kennedy was not the farcical figure which Dunbar made him. In Douglas's *Palice of Honour* he is "Greit Kennedie," and Lyndsay praised his language. Probably of the same age as Dunbar, he was third son of the first Lord Kennedy of Carrick, and was a Master of Arts of Glasgow University. When he was apparently dying Dunbar wiped out his contumelious lashing of him by his quiet verse:

"Gud Maister Walter Kennedy,
In poynt of deid lyis veraly;
Gret ruth it were that so suld be:
Timor Mortis conturbat me."

In his *Flyting* he gives Dunbar as good as he gets, and does not pick and choose among his epithets and phrases.

Dunbar gives strong evidence of the existence of traditions of Celtic Giant Literature.

> "My fore grantschir hecht Fyn MacKowle, called
> That dang the devill, and gart him yowle,
> The skyis ranyd quhen he wald scowle,
> He trublit all the air;
> He gat my grantschir Gog Magog;
> Ay quhen he dansit, the warld wald schog;
> Five thousand ellis yeid in his frog kilt
> Of Hieland pladdis, and mair."

In midst of this grotesquery and ribald drollery he gives such a beautiful poetic picture as this:

> "He wald apon his tais stand,
> And tak the sternis doune with his hand, stars
> And set tham in a gold garland
> Above his wyfis hair."

There is also imaginative fancy peculiar to himself in the measure of Gow Macmorne by the height to which the moon could rise beside him:

> "My fadir, mekle Gow Mackmorne . . .
> Or he of eld was yeris thre,
> He wald stepe our the Occeane se;
> The mone sprang nevir above his kne;
> The hevyn had of him feir."

For three hundred years there was not to be in Scotland another poet of such varied power and genius as this man with the embittered heart, looking at life with a tear in his eye and a smile on his lip, out of the environment of the court of James of the Iron Belt.

The difference between Henryson and Dunbar is very strikingly seen in the quality of their humour. Henryson's is quaint, gentle, and with the soft touch of a kindly personality in it. Dunbar's is fierce at the heart. It has the snap of gleaming teeth in it. He is, in fact, a satirist wielding the lash of wit, which knows the secret of the tenderest place in his subject. One has only to look at his satire on Edinburgh, his mockery of the Friar of Tungland, whose attempt at flying was frustrated because the feathers of the barnyard fowls which he had used sought the level of the kitchen

midden most familiar to them. His fun is comicality dancing wild, and frequently spotted with the blood it draws from the tender skin with which it comes in contact, and from its own hands and feet wounded by flint and thorn. His fancy has the sheen of running streams by moonlight upon it. He is the Scottish Rabelais, with a touch of Villon sometimes in his work. Take these lines, so personal, yet so like a Phil May cartoon in charcoal.

> "In a draf mydding for euer and ay
> *Ut ibi sepeliri queam,*
> Quher drink and draff may ilka day
> Be cassyne *super faciem meam.*"

One wonders what Doctor Andrew Kennedy thought of that as a picture of his soul's desire ?

Dunbar is in other things as personally expressive of his emotion and purpose—a master of prosodic art, with variety of form and music in his verse. He holds a unique place in Scottish poetry. A priest, unpriestly in his life at the unclean court of a king, his humours had not the freshness of the flocks and fields. His *Robene and Makyne*, if he had written one, would have achieved an immortality very different from that which they won from the quaint pen of Henryson. Yet verily he knew the inmost heart of man, having first taken lessons in his own; and sometimes when he laughs the very echo of his laugh has the terribleness of dreadful memory about it. The pity is that he so often chose unsavoury topics, and presents them in the uniform they wore when he met them in the broad and narrow ways of the remarkable world he moved in.

Among the anonymous poetry of this time are *The Freiris of Berwick* and *The Thrie Priestis of Peblis*, both of which have been considered to be Dunbar's. The former is in the Maitland and the Bannatyne manuscripts. Printed early, it was included in Laing's and Small's editions of Dunbar, and must remain as being probably his, unless as notable a poet as he emerge from the oblivion in which he may be hiding. The story of the landlady's relations with the abbot, their ridiculous confusion on being discovered by the couple of monks Allan and Robert, who see, through the floor of the loft where they had received shelter, the fine supper spread for the abbot, which, however, along with the abbot is hid when the master unexpectedly returns, both abbot and

dinner being exorcised forth by a mock-magic spell of Friar Robert, much to the husband's delight, who never suspects his wife's peccadilloes, is not an original plot, but is very amusingly described. It belongs to a common repertoire of tale-tellers, and it found a vulgar repetition in Allan Ramsay's *The Monk and the Miller's Wife.*

The Thrie Tailes of the Thrie Priestis of Peblis has been credited by Pinkerton to Dean Steill; while Sibbald attributed it to Rolland of Dalkeith, a theory untenable, as the poem is in the Asloan manuscript, written in 1515, forty-five years before Rolland's time. Although dealing with priests, it has no Protestant bias in it. The stories are of serious intent, and consider questions of weight. Friar John's tale shows how, though a burgess rises to great possessions and influence through care and struggle against opposing fates, his heir, free from his necessities, treats lightly what he gets lightly, and spends freely what his father gathered with laborious pains. Being ashamed at length of the trade that dirtied his father's hands, he seeks the company of his betters, keeping pace with them till he loses all. Friar Archibald and Friar William tell their stories too, the one of a king who scorned the counsels of the elder wise men, choosing to take the advice of his raw young courtiers, till he had to learn through a prudent clerk who won his ear under the disguise of a fool; the other, in the spirit of *Everyman*, illustrating almsgiving and charity as the best advocates for the soul on Judgment Day.

The similarity of these poems suggested unity of authorship, but Dunbar's name is not in any way attached to them in manuscript or type; they lack his characteristic rollick in certain parts of their development, his Rabelaisian chuckle, his flash-light sweep of description, and the general touch of his genius. The tendency to-day is to leave these in the category of anonymous verse.

CHAPTER IX

GAWAIN DOUGLAS

At the court of James IV., along with Dunbar, was Gawain Douglas, third son of that Earl of Angus, who was known by the familiar sobriquet of "Bell the Cat," an epithet snatched out of his own mouth and applied to himself. The episode, which gave old Angus the title, though familiar, deserves repetition. It was when the Scottish nobles, dissatisfied with the unworthy favourites of James III., had met in council in the church at Lauder to consider what should be done, that Lord Gray brought the discussion to a point by a fable worthy of Menenius Agrippa. He told how the mice, annoyed by the cat, had moved a unanimous resolution that, in order to secure a quiet life for themselves, free from sudden alarms, a warning bell should be put around pussy's neck, the only difficulty which emerged being that it was hard to find a member of the community who would volunteer to perform the dangerous duty. Douglas, with the quick intuition worthy of a poet's father, saw at once the lesson of the apologue, and said, "I will bell the cat," in fulfilment of which undertaking he forthwith overthrew Cochrane, the king's favourite. The title stuck to him till his dying day.

1474-1522.

The circumstances of this poet were entirely different from those which saddened poor Dunbar. The latter belonged to a house which was in disgrace, and he had often to press, without rebate and without shame, his claims on the king. The Douglases, on the other hand, were almost regal in their weight and influence; and, in the earlier part of the poet's life, his blood and race secured unwavering recognition, although the sorrow, failure, and distress of his later years arose from the very same causes.

Of his place of birth and education we are uncertain,

but we know that in 1515, when he was examined regarding the steps whereby he had obtained the bishopric of Dunkeld, he gave his age as about forty years. His family influence early won for him good livings in the church, and in 1501 he was Dean or Provost of St Giles'. Although in his earlier years he does not appear prominently in the political life of the country, he had been no idle dreamer, for the fruit of assiduous literary labours was manifested in his poems and translations which belong to this period. After 1513, the fatal year of bloody Flodden, his poetic life ends. He becomes involved in the ambitions of his clan, and in somewhat selfish efforts after individual gain. Indeed, it had been better if the gentle poet had fallen on the dark field of Flodden's sorrow with his elder brothers George and William, and the two hundred gentlemen of his race who died there beside their king.

The actual references which throw light upon Douglas before Flodden's disaster reveal him in intimate relationship with the king, an ecclesiastic in high and prominent position, held in honour by all. In fact, at this time no man in Scotland or anywhere had a brighter outlook or hopes that made for greater happiness than this quiet poet. But the shadow of Flodden was to him as though unkindly fates had shut a door upon his peaceful past, and brought him into another world, where ambition and avarice yelped at one another, and rivalries for personal profit dragged violence and disaster again through Scottish fields. In all this the poet was involved, and the remaining nine years of his life became haunted by scrambling disappointment.

That disastrous battle to which we have already referred made vacancies, not only in temporalities, but in the highest offices of the church. The archbishop of St Andrews, who was also abbot of Aberbrothock and Dunfermline and prior of Coldingham, along with the bishop of the Isles and the abbots of Kilwinning, Cambuskenneth, and others, had been stricken ; and heaven and earth, but especially earth, were being moved by all who had influence to secure for their own people the vacant posts and emoluments. Very soon Douglas was pulling the strings in Scotland which rang the Pope's bell in Rome ; for the widowed queen, with a greater precipitancy than could be covered by her slight excuse, namely, that she required the strong influence of the Douglas name,

to support her in the unrest of her realm, had, after eleven months of widowhood, given her hand to the young Earl of Angus, nephew of the poet. Jealousy at once ran screaming among the nobility, for the record of the Douglases was one of daring ambitions and dangerous pride. And in the strife which followed the poet became involved. The queen at once began to move on his behalf in the matter of some of the vacant sees, writing to the Pope in the endeavour to secure for him the abbacy of Arbroath. But Hepburn of St Andrews, and Foreman of Moray, disputed his right, Hepburn actually, after siege, expelling from the castle the retainers of his rival, and holding his own, despite the efforts of Angus with two hundred horsemen to dispossess him. Foreman, however, having contrived to get a grant of the archbishopric and other offices of the deceased primate, managed, after negotiation, to get into his hands what he so keenly coveted, and Douglas withdrew from the unlovely controversy. In the same way the abbacy of Aberbrothock fell almost from his finger-tips, just when it seemed about to be his own. But the queen, apparently by the aid of her brother Henry VIII., obtained a bull in his favour awarding him the vacant see of Dunkeld. The queen's enemies again secured the intervention of a rival. The Earl of Atholl had prevailed upon the canons to nominate his brother Andrew Stewart, prebendary of Craig, though he was not yet in sub-deacon's orders. Douglas was therefore tried under some ancient Scottish Acts for procuring bulls from Rome. Convicted, he was put in the charge of his former opponent Hepburn, and confined in the castles of Edinburgh, St Andrews, and Dunbar for about a year. By this time the influence of the queen had practically been destroyed, and the regency passed into the hands of Albany. On his liberation Douglas renewed his claim to the bishopric, which was duly confirmed by the regent, after shameful scenes unworthy of Christianity.

Albany having returned to France to escape for a while the nauseating broils of the Scottish nobles, he left the regency in the hands of the archbishops of St Andrews and Glasgow, each of whom was bitterly jealous of the other, along with the Earls of Angus, Arran, Huntly, and Argyle.

A skirmish which was the outcome of the jealousy and strife of this coterie of ambitious nobles, and in which the

poet was involved, long remained in popular memory under the title of "Clear the Causeway." The family of Hamilton, with some of their adherents and friends from the west, had resolved to seize the person of the Earl of Angus, as they considered his predominating influence to be prejudicial to the state. They were assembled in Archbishop Beaton's house, and Angus requested his uncle the poet to intercede with Beaton in the interests of peace. The crafty Beaton asserted, however, that things were now quite beyond his power, declaring it upon his conscience. As he spoke he beat his hand upon his breast, and a coat of armour underneath his cassock rang in response. "My lord," pawkily said the poet, "I fear your conscience clatters!"—that is, "blabs secrets." The Douglases, making a virtue of necessity, took possession of the narrow closes of the High Street, and in the melee which ensued the Hamiltons were swept before them, leaving over seventy dead behind them. The causeway of Edinburgh seldom got such a sweeping in its day! Beaton was dragged from the precincts of the altar of the Blackfriars, and was only saved in the nick of time by the poet, who hastened to protect him.

In the subsequent history of the squabbles in the regency, and the strife between Margaret and her husband, Douglas, the poet-bishop, did not show himself to advantage. Poets should seldom interfere with politics! He threw in his lot with his nephew and the Douglas faction, who were driven into flight and under the shelter of England. Here he made the acquaintance of Polydore Vergil, who had come to England to collect the revenues of the papal court, and was engaged in studies of the history of England. Him Douglas took occasion to warn against the heresies of Major, who had recently been denying the fables of earlier historians in regard to the origin of the Scottish people, and especially the much-loved episode of Pharaoh's daughter. His enemies at home had succeeded in having him branded as a traitor and outcast from the kingdom of Scotland, forfeiting his goods, income, and rights. In much misery, therefore, he lingered through his later days "weary of life," and a broken-down sorner for favours on the English king, denouncing his nephew Angus as a "witless fule," and resolved to stay in England, no matter what penury and distress soever he might sustain. It is his last recorded vow, and it speaks of poverty, exile, and sorrow.

Failure is drawing the curtain, and regret is blowing out the candle by the bed of the poet, who, ere he became involved in political intrigue and plots of selfish betterment, had brought into Scottish verse, with freshness of genius almost akin to revelation, the voice of Nature, the singing of the birds and streams, and the multi-coloured parade of the changing seasons. In September 1522, probably in the house of Lord Dacre, this poet fell a victim to the plague, but he had been worried nigh to death already by the wolf of Scottish politics, and he was glad to be at last out of the reach of clan rivalries and the girding persecutions of a hostile fate. He is buried in the Savoy church. He left behind him a name esteemed for learning, wisdom, and kindness, even Buchanan recording his "summa temperentia, et singularis animi moderatio, atque, in rebus turbulentis, inter adversas factiones, perpetua fides."

His chief works which have come down to us are allegorical poems, *The Palice of Honour*, and *King Hart*, with his epoch-making translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*. In these we find, but especially in the immortal prologues to the *Aeneid*, the Nature chord, throbbing for the first time with characteristic tone in the Scottish harp.

To Douglas the impulse of Nature appealed with a directness previously unknown in Scottish poets. The earlier Nature touches had followed, sometimes almost slavishly, the conventions of Chaucer and his school. But in the lines of Douglas there is found the direct outlook upon, and transcription from, truly Scottish scenes, beheld and noted by a loving Scottish eye. Of course, at first he follows tradition, for it is always more difficult for a student and scholar like him to beat out tracks of his own. The shadows beside whose presence he had burned the midnight oil are apt to modulate his stride to their remembered music, and often he must see Nature clothed in the hues of the windows whereon these old-time artists had painted their interpretation of her secret. His earlier poems, therefore, *The Palice of Honour* and *King Hart*, are built on conventional lines, though even in them his heart breaks out of bondage and beats an independent lilt. Though quite evidently one of the most learned and widely-read men of his day, he yet sees, thinks, and speaks for himself, breaking away very frequently from the narrow ruts of allegorical conventions

of his time. Except in his prologues to the *Aeneid*, his vocabulary is tainted by uncouth Latinisms of form and phrase, and while his verse is constructed with skill and art, it has not the verve and fluency, nor the revealing of the inner self, which do so characterize the utterance of Dunbar. He speaks of himself as "Scottish," writing in the "Scottis" not "Inglis" tongue, and is the first to do so. He openly declares his endeavour to be free entirely from "all Sudroun" or English influence, but he finds it not quite so easily done.

> "Lyk as in Latyne bene Grew terms sum — Greek
> So me behovit quhilum, or than be dum,
> Some bastard Latyne, French, or Inglis oiss — use
> Quhair scant war Scottis—I had na uther choiss."

The Palice of Honour is an allegory of life and its duties. On a bright May morning he has a dream while in an ecstasy,

> "Amyd a forest by a hyddeous flude."

He sees a beautiful procession sweep by in noble state. The queen of Wisdom is going past on her way to the palace of Honour. Minerva is attended by as miscellaneous a mob as ever ran at the skirt of any deity. The Sibyls, Judith, Solomon, Aristotle, Livy, Socrates, Job, and Cicero are all rubbing shoulders in that crowded court. The companions of the queen include Jephthah's daughter and Iphigenia. His vision and the court splendours which he looks upon are favourite devices of all poets of the middle ages.

Moping in his melancholy desert, he hears soft music far away, and the court of Love goes by. Dido and Eneas, Troilus and Cresside, Cleopatra and Antony, and the innumerable host of earth's lovers of renown are in that company. Moved by the sight he sings a ballad of inconstancy in love, which betrays his lurking-place, and in punishment for such a slight upon the goddess and her court he is dragged with many a buffet before the throne of Venus. He is saved by intervention of the muses on condition that he recant the slanders perpetrated in his song, and sing a new ballad to a different tune. In the court of the muses he is so dazzled by the crowd of illustrious bards that he cannot name them all. Homer is there alone of the Greeks, for Greek had not yet come into the curriculum of Scottish scholars; but the Latins and Italians are fully represented; Virgil, Ovid, Plautus, Persius, Petrarch, Boccaccio; and the Englishmen

Chaucer and Gower, with his own peers Kennedy, Dunbar, and a poet identified as Quintin Schaw. There is a delicate compliment paid here to Dunbar, who was amongst this brilliant throng, though "yet undeid."

The scenery is conventional. Meadows that never bloomed, flowers that never gave their scent on any air, knights and ladies that never danced on any sod, are in abundance. Yet there is a direct enough character picture in these lines:

> "Juvenall, like ane mowar him allone,
> Stude scornand everie man as thay yeid by." went

The palace of Honour shines afar on a lofty rock, round which go many paths, weaving their devious ways, but only one that seeks right on to the peak. An attendant nymph explains what he sees. Of a sudden a gaping trench near the summit, hell-deep, where may hapless wretches welter, yawns before them. These are the whilom seekers of honour, now stumbled into ruin through pleasure and sloth. He is carried by the hair over the gulf up to the giddy height. Thence he beholds the world tumbled in pain and wretchedness, while a beautiful vessel, in whose shipwreck some are lost and some saved on floating planks, is described by the nymph of the court of Venus as "the Carwell of the State of Grace," those who are lost being the faithless lovers of worldly pleasures, while those who are saved are those who have done good works in Christ. This in itself is an example of the many incongruities which dog the footsteps of the allegorist wherever he moves.

The palace is a veritable house of wonder, and in the glass of Venus there he that looks may see all great deeds in history, with many strange personalities, like a crushed and crowded "At home" of the gods. Amongst them are

> "Great Gowmakmorne and Fyn Makcoul,"

Ossianic heroes, well-known by allusion even to Lowland readers, and mentioned incidentally before this time by Barbour[1] in the fourteenth century, and later by David

[1] "Rycht as Golmakmorn was wone
To haiff fra Fyngal his menyhe."

See also p. 105.

Lyndsay[1] and Colville.[2] There also he beheld the magic of necromancers, including Friar Bacon. He sees how

> "Of ane nutmeg they maid a monk in Hy, Iona
> Ane paroche kirk of ane peny py."

It is a sort of *Pilgrim's Progress*, and it shows that already Douglas possessed great skill in versifying. Especially in the ballad at the close of the poem, the very music of the composition, with its multiplicit rhymes, like the castanets and cymbals of a dancer, clashes even to-day through the uncouth and forgotten words.

King Hart is in reality a morality play clothed in allegory. Man's body is a castle wherein the heart is king. The passions and faculties are bodyguard and retinue. He sits secure in his "comely castle strong," and yet he has within its walls, as dangerous retainers,

> "Want-wyt, Vanegloir, Prodigalitie,
> Vnrest, Nicht-walk, and felon Glutony."

The stronghold is guarded by five strong warders. Sometimes the poet breaks away from allegory, and calls into his verse some grim Scottish fortalice.

> "So strang this king him thocht his castell stude,
> With mony towre and turat crownit hie:
> About the wall thair ran ane water void,
> Black, stinkand, sowr, and salt as is the sey,
> That on the wallis wiskit, gre by gre,
> Boldning to ryis the castell to confound:
> Bot thai within maid sa grit melody,
> That for thair reird they micht nocht heir the sound." din

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[1] "I trow you be grit Gow Makmorne."

Lyndsay, elsewhere, in his mockery of the pardoner and Relic-vendor, says:

> "Heir is ane relict, lang and braid
> Of Fine Macoull the richt chaft blaid,
> With teith, and al togidder:
> Of Colling's cow, heir is ane horne,
> For eating of Makconnal's corne,
> Was slane into Balquhidder."

In the latter part of this reference, he proves the antiquity of the quaint old Gaelic fairy lilt of *Cro Chailein*.

[2] "One man quoth he, oft-times hath stood
And put to flight a multitude,
Like Sampson, Wallace, and Sir Bewis,
And Finmacoul beside the Lewis."

Whigg's Supplication, 1681.

Near by dwells Dame Pleasure, and one day she rides forth with merry company. Youth and Delight, whom the king sends out as scouts, are taken captive. Wantonness, Foolhardiness, Green-Love, and Disport fall easy prey, and in an angry onset the king himself is wounded and taken prisoner. On reconciliation there is great happiness for a while, till one morning Age comes knocking at the door, and away ride Youth, Wantonness, and others. Especially fine is the picture of Fresh Delight, who, pretending to go, runs

> "wonder fast,
> And with ane pull gat Youthheid be the sleif:
> Abyd! Abyd! Gud fallow, the nocht greif;
> Len me thy cloke, to gys me for ane quhyle.
> Delyte come in, and all that saw his bak
> They wenit it had bein Youthheid bundin still.
> Bot eftirwart, quhen that thai with him spak,
> Thay knew it wes ane feinye made thame till. pretence
> Sone quhen he had disportit him his fill,
> His courtlie cloke begouth to fayd of hew;
> Thriftles, threid bair, . . .
> . . . quhilk wes befoirtyme blew."

Age, however, forces his way into the castle, and then the servitors on whom the king depended get their rebuke. Conscience especially should sooner have recognised his task ere Youth had fled.

> "The steid is stollin, steik the dure; lat se
> Quhat may avale; God wait! the stall is tume." empty

At last, advised by Wisdom to go to his own home, the king agrees. Strength, after waiting awhile, slips away quietly to his old comrades Youth and Delight. And over the moor comes a hideous company—Decrepitude and all his forces, Headache, and "Hoast," and Palsy, till they break down the walls utterly, and slay the king. It is a warning of the shadow that haunts the heels of lust, and the sob that is at the end of the laughter of low delights.

Greater however than these, is his translation of Virgil. It is an open door through which the spirit of northern song walks into the wide fields of the south. *The Kingis Quair* was a window ajar, letting in the melody of the world's music; this of Douglas is, however, not a passive thing, but an active influence. For the first time Scottish poetry crosses the Border and stirs the sleepers. This is the first translation

of Virgil into the English tongue, and the Earl of Surrey's version was inspired by and indebted to the Scotsman's verse. It gave to Scottish education the lift towards that eminence in classical learning which made it notable, and it remains one of the greatest translations of the Roman poet. It is full of first-hand transcriptions of Nature even in the translation. Thus it is difficult to eclipse the picture of the storm which smote the Trojan ships. Much of it, of course, is absolutely locked up in obsolete language, but look at this:

"Heich as ane hill the jaw of watter brak
And in ane heip come on thame with ane swak, — blow
Sum hesit hoverand on the wallis hycht, — uplifted
And sum the sownchand see so law gart lycht, — noisy
Thame semit the erd oppinnit amyd the flude;
swirled The stowr wp bullerit sand as it was wuid." — mad

Stiff, difficult Scots is his language, but his prologues to the books of the *Aeneid* are true pictures of Nature, done with an open eye, a true heart, and a full brush. There is no writing about Nature like it until Thomson wrote his *Seasons*, and Thomson was a Scotsman also. It is a pity that, owing to the great change in the language, they are practically sealed books except to the scholar and the student, but they should be studied. It is a pity, too, that they could not be re-written and modernised without loss of verve and expression.

Especially in one of them, a Scottish winter evening of 1512 stands depicted as though we saw it through a window pane. Take a line here and there. See how clearly descriptive it is:

"Reveris ran reid on spait with watteir broune,
And burnis hurlit all thair bankis downe, . . .

"Scharp soppis of sleit, and of the snypand snawe. — biting
ditches The dowy dichis war all donk and wait,
The law vaille flodderit all wyth spait, . . . — flood
wave The wynd maid wayfe the reid weyd on the dyk. . . . — weed
Puire laboraris and byssy husband men
wet Went wayt and wery draglyt in the fen;" — draggled

You can hear the on-ding of the biting blast, and every living thing is shivering and cowering, out of shelter in the rain-swept moors. That little snatch is only a fragment torn out of a whole great picture, so nakedly true in its painting that not even the minutely observant eye of Scott has made a more vivid transcription.

CHAPTER X

SIR DAVID LYNDSAY

THE next outstanding figure after Gawain Douglas in Scottish poetry is Sir David Lyndsay of the Mount, so quaintly and characteristically drawn by Sir Walter Scott in his *Marmion*. Like George Buchanan, he secured, through his familiar intercourse with the king, a freedom of wit, phrase, and opinion, which prompted him to speak of abuses with a directness and immunity from persecution perfectly remarkable at a time when the church was supreme. In this he may be reckoned among the pioneers of the Reformation; not so much that he in any way impugned ecclesiastical doctrine, as that he exposed the looseness of life of the monks and friars, with a vocabulary and method which perhaps were by no means testimonials to his own purity, unless they reflected a laxity of standard in his times somewhat startling to us in the present day. He at any rate accelerated the momentum of the church on that downward progress which carried it irretrievably through the unfolding doors of the Reformation. His *Satyre of the Thrie Estaits*, while it was his masterpiece in every feature of his genius and work, is humanly terrible to contemplate, when one remembers that it was apparently acted before the king and court in open day at Linlithgow.

1490-1555.

It were, indeed, a mistake to look upon Lyndsay as an agent for purity. His verse could never have been an instrument for uplifting and sweetening the life of the people. It is also a mistake to say that, until the time of Burns, his work was familiar in the mouths of the Scottish folk. All that time, in consequence of the Union and the invasion of English influences, very much of David Lyndsay must have been to many unintelligible, so far at least as vocabulary goes.

In reading his page we must certainly take into account the outlook of his day, and his anxiety for his former pupil, whose moral life was in great danger from the example and

encouragement of vice given him at his court by those who attempted to get him into their power.

Lyndsay was a scion of the Lyndsays of the Byres, a Haddingtonshire family of note. His birth was probably about the year 1490. The common belief that he was born at the Mount, near Cupar, is disputed by David Laing in favour of a site in East Lothian. His youth was spent in the period when the advancing wave of the Renaissance was approaching the shores of our land, to sweep away, as it did, through the new ideas which it brought, so much of the dust and rubbish of mediæval accumulations.

France and Spain had achieved something like nationality under the influence of Louis XI., and of Ferdinand and Isabella; but Scotland was still bound in that oligarchic feudalism which had so long oppressed it. The tragedy of Flodden let loose into the realm which had been so much benefited by the reign of James IV. turbulent ambitions and greedy hunger for power. The rule of the Monarch of the Iron Belt, whose marriage with Margaret Tudor of England had flung an arch of love and peace across what had for so long been an angry gulf of national hate and strife, had been marked by justice and a catholic sympathy marvellous for the time, and productive of prosperous enterprise and broadening thought. In 1495, in response to the earnest request of James, Pope Alexander VI. had granted a bull for the establishment of a university at Aberdeen. Bishop William Elphinstone founded King's College, and the university had for its first Principal the renowned Hector Boece. It was in this reign also that St Andrews was strengthened by the foundation of St Leonard's College, which was endowed with the revenue of an hospital originally intended for the support of poor pilgrims who visited the shrine of the saint.

As momentous for the life and thought of the kingdom as the universities themselves was the advent of printing into Scotland. Though brought into England in 1477, it did not come into our country till 1507, and Walter Chepman and Andro Myllar, the two men who were sponsors of the Scottish press, received from the king the monopoly of the art. The poet's youth was spent, therefore, in a period of such national strength and inspiration as seldom had gladdened Scottish fields.

He entered the university of St Andrews in 1505, and his

name, in the records of St Salvator, follows the name of David Beaton, who was, later on, the cardinal of cruel memory, and whose violent death at the hand of Norman Leslie and his friends this very poet commemorates in triumphant verse. What course he followed on leaving college is unknown. Had the accounts of the intromissions of the treasurer of the royal household between August 1508 and September 1511 survived, they should undoubtedly have cast much light upon the subject; but in those that are extant for the 12th October 1511 there is a note of the sum of three pounds four shillings being disbursed for "blue and yellow taffetis to be a play-coat for David Lyndsay for the play, to play it in the king and queen's presence in the abbey of Holyrood."

By this time Henry VIII., passionate and proud, had succeeded to the throne of England, and he impetuously threw himself into the quarrel between Louis of France and the Pope, casting his influence against the French. Louis at once reminded romantic James, in whose veins the poetry of the Stewarts ran like ancient glamour, of the long connection between France and Scotland; and the Scottish monarch, with the flower of his chivalry and the very best of his people, crossed the Border on their way to Flodden, whose doleful day brought bereavement to almost every house in the land, and black ruin to Scotland's hopes,

> "When shivered was fair Scotland's spear
> And broken was her shield."

Just the previous year the king had made the poet his new-born prince's chief page, and for the next eleven years he was in close attendance on his royal charge. Lyndsay was rather the companion mind which by its wit and wisdom might act as a whetstone for that of the young prince. From his own description, in the *Epistil to the Kingis Grace*, his office seemed to cover, in its variety of functions, everything from a gentle nurse to a genial tutor:

> "Quhen thow wes young, I bure thee in myne arme
> Full tenderlie, tyll thow begouth to gang;
> And in thy bed oft happit thee full warme,
> With lute in hand, syne, sweitlie to thee sang:
> Sumtyme, in dansing, feiralie I flang;
> And sumtyme, playand farsis on the flure;
> And sumtyme, on myne office takkand cure."

Later, when he was fallen into that neglect which was too often the recompense of those who served kings, he gives a somewhat pathetically humorous picture of himself and the king.

"Quhow, as ane chapman beris his pak,
I bure thy Grace upon my bak,
And sumtymes, strydlingis on my nek,
Dansand with mony bend and bek.
The first sillabis that thow did mute
Was PA, DA LYN."

The young prince as he advanced in age advanced in mind and imagination, and then Lyndsay became his guide through the mystical under-world of mediæval legend and romance:

"Of antique storeis, and deidis marciall;
More plesandlie the tyme for tyll ouerdryve,
I have, at length, the storeis done descryve
Of Hectour, Arthour, and gentyll Julyus,
Of Alexander, and worthy Pompeyus;

"Of Jasone, and Medea, all at length,
Of Hercules the actis honorabyll,
And of Sampsone the supernaturall strenth,
And of leill luffaris storeis amiabyll;
And oft tymes have I feinyeit mony fabyll,
Of Troylus, the sorrow, and the joye,
And Seigis all of Tyir, Thebes, and Troye."

From certain entries in the treasurer's account, it is proved that Lyndsay married in 1522 Janet Douglas, who held the appointment afterwards of seamstress to the king, at an annual income of ten pounds.

The misfortunes of Scotland were comsummated in the marriage between Queen Margaret and the Earl of Angus, when the young Prince James V. took the government into his hands at the age of twelve. Lyndsay denounced this as the folly of those

"Quho wald, in ane stormye blast,
Quhen marinaris bene all agast
Throw dainger of the seis raige,
Wad tak ane chylde of tender aige,
Quhilk never had bene on the sey,
And to his biddyng all obey,
Gevyng hym haill the governall
Of schip, marchand, and marinall,

For dreid of rockis and foreland,
To put the ruther in his hand :
Without Goddis grace, is no refuge :
Geve thare be dainger, ye may juge.
I gyf thame to the Devyll of hell,
Quhilk first devysit that counsell,
I wyll nocht say, that it was treassoun ;
Bot I dar sweir, it was no reassoun.
I pray God, lat me never se ryng,
In to this realme, so young ane Kyng."

Angus, returned from exile, gripped Scotland in a regency, and for four years the prince was, to all intents and purposes, his prisoner. Every vile method was adopted to tighten about the young prince the bondage of the influence of Angus. Surrounded by every temptation at a most perilous age, his sensuality fostered by selfish worldlings, his moral character was weakened beyond remedy.

There is some plain speech in such a matter, for it was a plain-speaking age, and Lyndsay does not hesitate to take advantage of the custom, making certain ladies' names unpleasantly immortal. In 1528, however, the young king galloped from Falkland to Stirling through the Ochil Hills, and Angus was hastily overthrown.

During the calamity of this dark time, when those who loved the king most were banished from his presence, Lyndsay had been living in Fife at his own home, and it is to this period his poem *The Dreme* belongs. It has been taken as the most poetical of his productions, but it is difficult to estimate its claim, for, in the matter of musical language and silvery rhythm and in imagination, Lyndsay is, alongside of Dunbar and Douglas, cold and deficient. In power of satire, in strength of the moral indignation with which he worries the vices of his age, he, however, holds his own, and in this *Dreme*, which was the offspring of his brooding on the selfishness and dishonesty of courtiers and the immorality of priests and monks, he smites with a fearless hand.

Dame Remembrance shows in it the sufficiency of Scotland for her own highest prosperity. It was a fact that in Lyndsay's day Scotland, from her rivers and lochs, her fields, woods, and forests, could provide food for her population. Yet her strong and fearless children were poor, and much wretchedness prevailed amongst them. Dame Remembrance, speaking

with the voice of Lyndsay himself, lays the blame of this on the slackness of justice and the internecine disturbances which racked the kingdom. "John the Commonweill," miserable and in rags, about to leave his native country, confirms the suggestion. He declares that all his best friends have been driven abroad, the Borders are rent with murder, strife, and thieving; the Highlands and the Islands are cursed with their leasing and blood, while the Lowlands are bled nigh to death by greed. In support of his statement he gives incontrovertible details.

The poet is awakened by cannon from a ship in the offing, and takes the opportunity to give the king some very strong advice.

"Tak manlie curage, and leif thyne insolance,
And use counsale of nobyll dame Prudence;
Founde thee firmelie on Faith and Fortytude;
Drawe to thy courte Justice and Temperance;
And to the Commonweill have attendance.
And also, I beseik thy Celsitude,
Hait vicious men, and lufe thame that ar gude;
And ilke flattrer thou fleme frome thy presence,
And fals reporte out of thy Courte exclude.

"Do equale justice boith to gret and small;
And be exampyll to thy peple all,
Exercing verteous deidis honorabyll.
Be nocht ane wrache, for oucht that may befall:
To that unhappy vice and thow be thrall, if
Tyll all men thow sall be abhominabyll.
Kyngis nor Knychtis ar never convenabyll
To rewle peple, be thay nocht lyberall:
Was never yit na wrache to honour habyll."

He quotes the examples of Tarquin and "Mydas of Trace," for obvious reasons. He also continues the advice in his *Complaynt to the Kingis Grace*, where he warns the king against the Douglases.

At the same time he does not hesitate to suggest that his royal highness should notice, with a reward of some kind, the services of David Lyndsay. As the fruit of this hint he was made, in 1530, Lyon King of Arms.

He lacks much that a great poet requires, vivid perception of analogies, colour, atmosphere, and clang. In his vision of the Pit, as compared with Dunbar's *Dance of the Sevin Deidly Synnis*, his creation seems most unimaginative. The

people do not live. They have no outstanding characteristics whereby they may appeal to the imagination. They walk into hell as if the butler had called their names.

In the *Testament and Complaynt of the Kingis Papyngo* he makes the priest tremble, and the courtier grow red with discomfort at least. Here he deals with the Spirituality of the kingdom. He apologises for his own deficiencies in poetic style, mentioning with respect the great poets that have gone before him, including Chaucer, Gower, Lydgate, Kennedy, Dunbar, Schaw, Mersar, Roull, Henryson, Hay, and Holland, and mourning for the recent death of Gawain Douglas :

> "Allace ! for one, quhilk lampe wes of this land,
> Of Eloquence the flow and balmy strand,
> And in our Inglis rethorik, the rose,
> As of rubeis the charbunckle bene chose ! "

The dying parrot reviews the history of the country. He concentrates upon the worldliness of the Church. He shows how, through the increase of ecclesiastical wealth, corruption had entered into possession. Here again speaks the old apologue of the birds, as in Holland's *Howlat*. The pyot represents a canon regular, the raven a black monk, the hawk a holy friar. The parrot herself would have preferred the mavis, nightingale, and lark to be the companions of her death. She leaves her heart to the king, her feathers to the owl, her eyes to the bat, her beak to the pelican, her music to the cuckoo, her tongue to the goose, and her bones to the phœnix, and what was left to her three executors, who, however, devour her altogether, and quarrel over her heart.

In *Kitteis Confessioun* the greed of the curates, the moral risks of the confessional, and the system of ecclesiastical espionage in connection with the new Protestantism that was coming in, and especially of the Bible in the tongue of the people, are quite clearly shown :

> "Quod he, Have ye na wrangous geir?
> Quod scho, I staw ane pek of beir.
> Quod he, That suld restorit be,
> Tharefor, delyver it to me ; "

He endeavours to get not only at the private life of the person he is confessing, but of the family in which she serves, and

especially in the matter of the new English Bibles now being imported.

"Quod he, Ken ye na heresie?
I wait nocht quhat that is, quod sche.
Quod he, Hard ye na Inglis bukis?
Quod scho, My maister on thame lukis.
Quod he, The bishop that sall knaw,
For I am sworne, that for to schaw.
Quod he, What said he of the King?
Quod scho, Of gude he spak na thing.
Quod he, His Grace of that sall wit;
And he sall lose his lyfe for it."

The sympathy of Lyndsay with the reformers is very clearly seen in that little touch, and also later on, when he makes Kitty say:

"And mekil Latyne he did mummill,
I hard na thing bot hummill bummill.
He schew me nocht of Goddis word,
Quhilk scharper is than ony sword,
And deip intill our hart does prent,
Our syn quharethrow we do repent; . . .
Nor of His promisses full trew,
That saifis all that wyll beleve,
That Sathan sall us never greve.
He teichit me nocht for till traist
The confort of the Haly Ghaist; . . .
Bot gave me pennance, ilk ane day
Ane *Ave Marie* for to say:
And Fridayis fyve na fische to eit,
Bot butter and eggis ar better meit;
And with ane plak to buy ane Messe,
Fra drounkin Schir Jhone Latynelesse."

He does not hesitate to affirm that though the priests try, in regard to confession, to make

"all men understand,
That it is Goddis awin command;
Yit it is nocht but mennis drame,
The pepill to confound and schame. . . .
Sittand in mennis conscience,
Abone Goddis magnificence;
And dois the pepill teche and tyste
To serve the Pape the Antechriste.
To the Greit God Omnipotent
Confess thy syn, and sore repent;
And traist in Christ, as wrytis Paule,
Quhilk sched his blude to saif thy saule,
For nane can thee absolve bot He,
Nor tak away thy syn frome thee."

The *Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis* is the only extant specimen of a sixteenth century Scottish play. The earliest drama mentioned in Scotland was the *Haly Blude*, acted in Aberdeen in 1445. An anti-papist play by Kyllour is mentioned by Knox as having been represented before James V. in Stirling in 1535. John Wedderburn, in 1540 at Dundee, also brought before the public, in the play-fields, several comedies and tragedies dealing with the abuses and superstitions of his time. The silence of the church historians in regard to dramatic representations is explained by the fact that they were concentrating their attention on the ecclesiastical struggle, and only those which nipped the nose of Rome appealed to them for a place on their page. In 1575 an Act of the Kirk provided for dramatic censorship. Lyndsay, as Lyon King of Arms, had the right of surveillance over pageants and mummeries at royal festivals. The easy movement of the *Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis* is therefore perfectly explicable.

No more terrible picture of corruption remains anywhere than in these verses of this poet. His great masterpiece gathered all his plain speech and condemnation of living spiritual death into the most awful bit of direct utterance in the *Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis.* Its first exhibition, according to Laing, was at Linlithgow, at the feast of Epiphany 1539-40. It was acted before the king and queen and the ladies of the court, and a great concourse of people. It was performed also at Cupar-Fife, and in 1554 at Greenside, Edinburgh. The king was at this same time patronizing Buchanan, who was devoting his attention to his satirical drama against the Franciscans.

It not only reveals, in the plainest way with the plainest words—words of the very gutter—the sinful condition of the country, but it makes us wonder at the relationships among noble ladies and gentlemen, even leaders of the court life, in a land where such plain language could be used in their presence.

Lyndsay's work is a strong compound of morality play and topical satire, and it is intensely valuable as a picture of Scotland and the Scottish people just at the time when the foundations of the ancient Catholic Church were beginning to slip on the sinking sands which had crept beneath them. The interludes must have been extremely popular with the mob, and certainly were on the level of their humour.

The villains are Flattery, Falsehood, and Deceit, who are masked as Devotion, Wisdom, and Discretion. King Humanity, representing most probably James himself, declares his resolve to rule himself and his people wisely. But he is drawn away by Wantonness, Pleasure, and Solace, who bring him into contact with Dame Sensuality. Good-counsel endeavours to interpose, but is expelled at the instigation of the three traitors in disguise. In the midst of the revels Verity enters, and by her discourse alarms the three Vices, who accuse her of heresy, because she has the New Testament with her; and she is put in durance. Chastity next enters, but the bishops, abbots, and parsons alike turn their backs on her, and she has to come down amongst the people, who are represented by a Sutor and a Tailor. Divine Correction enters and brings back again to the monarch those that are best for his soul's good, whom he has expelled. In the first part of the *Satyre* the folly of the king and the corruption of his counsellers are thus rebuked. In the second part every evil in the life of the nation is pointed at, and shaken into exposure in public. The poor man complains of the greedy oppression of the clergy, and of the superstition which sells the bunkum of relics and pardons.

The Three Estates, to save their face, appear, but "John the Commonweill" exposes them without fear. Chastity makes her complaint against the prelates, and especially for the flagrant breach of their oath of celibacy, the priests dedicating themselves unto God and condemning by their oath the marriage relation, but at the same time notoriously giving themselves to lust, till hardly a woman they came in contact with was safe, while the children of these celibate churchmen were enriched with the property of the church, and married into the best families of the realm.

"Belewe ye, Sir, that lecherie be sin?
Na, trow nocht that, this is my ressoun quhy;
First, at the Romane Kirk will ye begin,
Quhilk is the lemand lamp of lechery:
Quhair Cardinalis, and Bischopis, generally,
To luif ladies, thay think ane plesand sport,
And out of Rome hes baneist Chastity,
Quha with our Prelats can get na resort."

It is here that the absolute marvel of plain-speaking is found, when the poet dared to make such charges in

unmistakable terms, before the assembled court and people, in the light of day. It makes one wonder what strong hand held away from him the vengeful grip of the church.

There can scarcely be a more extraordinary composition anywhere. It is as if some Samson had smashed the stained-glass windows behind which the devil and his brood were lurking in monkish cowl. It was under a real risk that Lyndsay denounced these vices. For far less plain-speaking than his, many won the fire of martyrdom as their reward.

It is, of course, a terrible thing to plead for purity in obscene language. But the age must be extremely unclean which forces even a reformer to wade in filth. The period was rude, and its outlook, when its ladies did not hide their faces before this fierce muse dancing in her nakedness unashamed, is beyond the understanding of our century. Notwithstanding this, it is one of the strongest protests against oppression in church and state, and against the heedlessness with which the poor were trampled, and it was for these reasons that, until the beginning of the eighteenth century, Lyndsay's memory was cherished, and his work looked upon as a *vade mecum* in the matter of honourable conduct, and as a *fons et origo* of the Scottish tongue.

Lyndsay saw the wide world on royal errands. He was in Flanders in April 1531 on an embassy for renewing trade relations between Scotland and the Netherlands under a treaty which had first been completed in 1430. The embassy was in the charge of Sir George Campbell of Lundie, and, having been received with great pomp at Brussels, succeeded in its purpose. In 1536 he was again upon the continent, in France, in the matter of his sovereign's wooing of Marie de Bourbon. The impetuous monarch himself followed his envoys, and turned from Marie to Princess Magdalene, the eldest daughter of King Francis I., the marriage with whom duly took place at Nôtre Dame. She died, however, forty days after landing in this country.

The sad dragging story of James V. came to an end in Falkland, and that queen of tragedy, Mary, succeeded to the throne, a babe in her cradle.

Scotland felt the heavy hand of persecution in the burning of George Wishart and others, and made her protest through the murder of Cardinal Beaton. Lyndsay's sympathies were with the reformers, and he is said to have been in communi-

cation with the refugees in St Andrew's castle, into which those actively engaged in protest, under arms, had thrown themselves. To them came John Knox, later on, as their chaplain. Lyndsay is mentioned by Knox, in his *History of the First Reformation*, as having been in consultation in the church with the castle party when they resolved to call Knox to the ministry, but this is open to question.

In 1548 he was sent to the King of Denmark to negotiate free trade for the Scottish merchants, and to arrange to have the protection of Danish ships against the English. After his return from this expedition he composed *The Historie and Testament of Squyer Meldrum*. He died on 18th April 1555, where and how no man knows, and his burial-place is as secret as that of Moses.

Lyndsay was a reformer, but not in the popular sense. He pleaded rather for the reformation of all the abuses of the realm, and, naturally, of the church, which was corrupt. He speaks very straight to James, pleading with him in simple, memorable words:

"Sir, learn to be ane king!"

Doubtless, had he lived a little later, he would have thrown his lot in with the reformed lords, but he never renounced the Romish faith. To him Mary is the Queen of Queens, seated next to the Throne of Heaven. Yet how he escaped punishment in some form for his plain speaking in regard to the church remains a continual mystery. Though he was not actually under its banner, yet the weight of his whole life and teaching gave, undoubtedly, enormous impulse to the cause of the reformation.

The remarkable thing in his life is the fidelity of the king to his old friend. No matter how plainly he spoke against that church which claimed such power over the very gates of hell, and which had already mingled the dust of martyrs with the ashes of cruel fires, the king threw his protection around him, and indeed seemed to encourage him.

The difference between Lyndsay and Dunbar as a satirist was that while Dunbar held up to ridicule and exposure the characters and customs of the self-seekers, courtiers, and citizens of his age, making that age dance often to his verse in indecent nakedness, Lyndsay was especially the voice of the national spirit protesting against the corruptions of

social and ecclesiastical institutions. There is in Lyndsay more deep purpose than in Dunbar, but his poetry suffered accordingly, losing the fine vision and becoming more like a diagnosis of national disease. He was much less of an artist than Dunbar, and his poems, in many respects, become pamphlets in verse, the purpose taking so much the place of poetic inspiration. Later on, with the printing press at his disposal, his work might have manifested a different form.

While he wrote in allegory the allegory did not satisfy him as a poetic end. It became the envelope and vehicle of the characteristics of his own time. He had no originality in his verse. He was content to utilize, as scaffolding for his own upbuilding, what came down to him from the "makkars" who had written before his day, and he is probably indebted for form to Douglas's *Palice of Honour* rather than to Dunbar, who was more of a lyric writer than a labourer at allegory. He was, of course, also indebted to Chaucer, as they all were.

Like Dunbar, he had the gift of plainness of speech and picture, so that we look right into his period as through an open window. It was a period of slack morality, in which little thought was given to moral relations, and his work, most probably for its directness of thought and utterance, remained popular amongst the plain-spoken peasantry till later modern times.

CHAPTER XI

SIXTEENTH-CENTURY POETS

It is seldom the lot of any country to escape blank and poor periods after times of full and rich expression. Accordingly, of those who were contemporary with Douglas and Lyndsay and immediately subsequent to them, there remain little but the names. Lyndsay, following Dunbar's example, speaks of some of them:

> "Quho can say more than Schir James Inglis sayis,
> In ballattis, farses, and in plesand playis;
> Bot Culrose hes his pen maid impotent.
> Kyd, in cunnyng and pratick rycht prudent;
> And Stewarte, quhilk desyrith ane staitly style,
> Full ornate werkis daylie dois compyle.
>
> "Stewarte of Lorne wyll carpe rycht curiouslie;
> Galbraith, Kynlouch, quhen thay lyst tham applie
> In to that art, ar craftie of ingyne,
> Bot, now of lait, is starte up haistelie,
> Ane cunnyng Clerk, quhilk wrytith craftelie,
> Ane plant of Poeitis, callit Ballendyne,
> Quhose ornat workis my wytt can nocht defyne:
> Gett he in to the courte auctoritie,
> He wyll precell Quintyn and Kennedie."

John Bellenden was a church dignitary, an alumnus of St Andrews University and a Doctor of Divinity of Paris. His translation of the *History* of Boece and of Livy is the earliest vernacular prose of note in Scotland. *c.* 1533-1587. Little survives of his work in verse, except a few "prohemiums" which he was fond of prefixing to his translations in prose, and which were moral prologues emphasising the lessons of the works he was translating. His verse walks quite steadily, but clothed in the garments and speaking with the dialect of his predecessors.

As Bellenden held by the old faith, it is supposed to have dragged persecution down upon him, and to have caused his exile. From an entry in the matriculation album for 1508 of St Andrews University, "Jo Ballentyn nactus Loudoniæ," which conjecturally is taken as a reference to Bellenden, it is supposed that he was born towards the close of the fifteenth century. It was in 1530 that he began the translation of Boece's *History*. His Scottish prose is characterized by the charm of personal touch and individual style.

Bellenden was evidently in employment at the court. To the active hostility aroused by his faithful services he attributes his misfortunes:

> "And fyrst occurrit to my remembring
> How that I wes in seruice with the kyng,
> Put to his grace in zeris tenderest,
> Clerk of his comptis, thoucht I wes inding, unworthy
> With hart and hand and every othir thing
> That mycht hym pleis in ony maner best,
> Quhill hie inuy me from his seruice kest,
> Be thaim that had the court in governing,
> As bird but plumes heryit of the rest." without

In another place he states that he had been in the service of the king since the early infancy of his majesty. As Clerk of the Accounts, one could expect that he should be kept so busy as to have little leisure for even making enemies. One of his name was secretary to Archibald Earl of Douglas, husband to the Queen Dowager in the year 1528, probably after he had left the king's service. The name, however, was not uncommon, and there is every probability of error in the conjectural identifications sometimes made in this way. He received seventy-eight pounds for his translation of Boece, and thirty-six for his translation of Livy, besides ecclesiastical recompense, being appointed Canon of Ross and Archdeacon of Moray. He had doubtless good reason for being dissatisfied even with what he received, for there is no proof that the Scottish court was unique in bestowing promotion upon personal merit and intellectual excellence.

Kyd has, in the Bannatyne manuscript, a composition attributed to him, entitled *Richt Fontane of Haillful Sapience*.

It is undoubtedly "cunnyng and pratick, rycht prudent," as Lyndsay styles it in his eulogium. Its spirit may be judged from this verse:

"Thy pastyme suld oft be in commonyng
With profound clerkis of science and prudens;
For cunnyng termes afferis in a king, are appropriate
Quhilk sald be polyt and of eloquence.
In hering wysmen men gettis sapience,
Without the quhilk is no stabilitie;
Thairfoir in tyme thow get intelligence,
Or elles thy wisdome sall in seeking be."

Galbraith and Kinloch are others whose works have disappeared.

Of Stewart, mentioned also in Bellenden's verse, all we know comes from Rolland's *Sevin Sages*, where he is spoken of as a court poet, and there are poems attributed to him in the Bannatyne manuscript, wherein his voice and style are extremely reminiscent of Dunbar. In one, which records the gifts he received at court for New Year's Day, he tells, in well-known lines,

"First lerges the king my cheife,
Quhilk come als quiet as a theif,
And in my hand sled shillingis twa,
To put his lergnes to preif
For lerges of this New Yeir day."

With sly touches he mentions the general meanness of the gifts thought fit for the poet, with the exception of that of "my lord of Bothwell."

"Stewarte of Lorne" has left nothing which can be authenticated as his. There is probably in his name in the Maitland and Bannatyne manuscripts, a *Vision* in which Dame Virtue prophesies that Scotland shall again have peace and prosperity.

Other Stewarts with compositions lingering to their credit in the Bannatyne collection are Henry, and Darnley himself, who has a love-song. James V. undoubtedly wrote verses which received the usual flattery a king's productions would always be sure to win. It may be safely said, however, that nothing absolutely genuine of his survives, though tradition

points to him as the author of *The Gaberlunzie Man* and *The Jolly Beggar*. The former is well known :

"The pauky auld carle came ovir the lee,
Wi' mony good-e'ens and days to mee,
Saying, 'Goodwife, for zour courtesie,
Will ze lodge a silly poor man?'
The night was cauld, the carle was wat,
And down azont the ingle he sat ;
My dochter's shoulders he gan to clap,
And cadgily ranted and sang.

"'O wow !' quho he, 'wer I as free
As first when I saw this countrie,
How blyth and merry wad I bee !
And I wad nevir think lang.'
He grew canty and she grew fain,
But little did her auld minny ken
What thir slee twa togither were sayn
When wooing they were sa thrang."

In the morning, however, there were searching and excitement, for the charms of the gaberlunzie man had won the heart of the goodwife's daughter, and she was over the moors and far away before they knew :

"Meantime far hin, out owre the lee,
Fu' snug in a glen where nane could see,
The twa, with kindlie sport and glee,
Cut frae a new cheese a whang.
The prieving was gude, it pleas'd them baith,
To lo'e her for ay he gae her his aith.
Quo she, 'To leave thee I will be laith,
My winsome gaberlunzie man.'"

The Jolly Beggar is strongly akin to this, but deals with the amours of a knight in disguise as a gangrel :

"He took a horn frae his side,
And blew baith loud and shrill,
And four and twenty belted knights
Came skipping o'er the hill.

"And he took out his little knife,
Loot a' his duddies fa' ;
And he was the brawest gentleman
That was amang them a'."

The authenticity of this poem is extremely open to question. The fact of the amorous adventures of a great

knight or a lord in disguise, which is the basis of the ballad, taken in conjunction with the known habits of King James, makes it much more likely that the verses are founded on some adventure of that monarch while on his wanderings amongst the peasant people of his country. They probably were written by some facile pen about his court, out of compliment to the king. It is a romantic commonplace of historical knowledge how the monarch loved to slip out of the private postern, through the "windy pass" at the back of Stirling Castle, and go down, disguised, among his people as "the gudeman of Ballangeich." The Stewarts were given to this, probably from various reasons, the romantic wandering impulse of their blood, perhaps the love of a little change, the glad opportunity of escape from the very narrow and cramped environment of the Scottish castles and palaces, the desire to see and hear the truth of the condition of their kingdom, and at the same time the love of intrigue which marked them all. And although, from questions of internal evidence, it has been doubted whether *The Gaberlunzie Man* can be as old as his day, while *The Jolly Beggar* was first printed in Herd's *Songs* in 1769, Ramsay showing no sign of acquaintance with it, these may be taken as perfect reflections of the times they refer to. If not authentic they bear the marks of having been builded upon authentic originals.

Scotland had at this time a certain romantic element in the nomad gypsy tribes that had appeared in the country under the leadership of men who called themselves by strange titles of nobility. These gypsies had attracted the attention even of the court. King James IV. paid fourteen shillings to an "earl of Greece" in May 1502, while in April 1505 there is in the treasurer's accounts a record of seven pounds having been handed over "to the Egyptians." In the archives of Denmark we find a letter which, in July 1505, James wrote to his uncle the king of that country, recommending "Anthonius Gagino, a Count of Little Egypt, who, with others of his company, was making a pilgrimage through Christendom." The gay-hearted, laughing band of tawny, dark-eyed strangers must undoubtedly have appealed to the romantic mind of James V., who, on 25th May 1530, gave forty pounds "to the Egyptianis who dansit before the king in Halyrudhous." He recognised "John Faw, lord and erle of Littil Egipt," as having the right to execute justice

"upon his company and folks conformed to the laws of Egypt," giving him the right to use the state "prisons, stocks, fetters, and other things necessary thereto," with the protection of his royal writ to the gypsy king and his people in their passing to and fro through the kingdom.

The gypsies fell into evil days very soon, and no king for many a generation has ever thought of treating them as being worthy of consideration, but one cannot help thinking that the imagination of James V. would be stirred by this strange people, with whom, in some of his adventures, he may have come into friendly contact, originating episodes worthy of record in rollicking verse like *The Jolly Beggar* or *The Gaberlunzie Man.*

Henry Balnaves has left a sharply pungent ballad of advice to gallants.

Sir John Futhie, a priest who wrote a song beginning "O God abufe," and who introduced into Scotland "a new method of fingering and playing organs," has two love-songs to his credit, which he probably sang to the humming accompaniment of an old organ somewhere.

Fleming has a *jeu d'esprit* regarding bad wives.

Sir John Moffat has been credited with *The Wyfe of Auchtermuchty*, a kind of forerunner of *John Grumlie.* It is a poem of rustic humours. All we know for certain concerning Moffat is that he was author of the poem *Brother, Be Wise, I Rede Yow Now.* There is a risk that this Sir John Moffat is confused with another Sir John Moffat, who was a chaplain of the morning service of Dunfermline Kirk, and who, having thus assurance of something like local colour in a Fifeshire picture of manners, might be more likely to have written the familiar ballad.

Dean David Steill wrote the *Ryng of Roy Robert*, and has attributed to him two love-poems, *Lanterne of Luve* and *Absent.*

Of Clapperton, whose work survives in *Wa worth Maryage*, Robert Norval, and Henry Scogan, particulars are entirely unknown.

The leading names are Alexander Scott and Alexander Montgomerie. Nothing is known authentically as to their origin. They seem to have been sixteenth century "men about town," as Montgomery says of himself and Scott that they

"all our dayis but daffis." sports

Scott is extremely difficult to identify, the name being so common in Scotland. It is certain that he spent much of his time about Edinburgh, and he seems to have endured many buffets of fortune. His poems, however, display a bold and fearless spirit; he does not gird at fate. He was married, but here again he had sorrow, for he tells us that his wife was involved in some liaison, and left him in "pane and wo." Whether this statement is a bit of fact or only a poetic fiction is difficult to know. He, like the other poets of his period, speaks candidly in regard to the Reformation. His conception of women is extremely low, as his poem *Of Wemenkynd* amply displays: c. 1525-1584.

"For quhy? no leid unleil thay leit,
Untrewth expresly thay expell;
Yit thay are planeist and repleit
Of falset and dissait thair sell;
So find I thair affectioun
Contrair thair awin complexioun."

He writes very scoffingly about them, and his pen is not clean. He was evidently a man of pleasure, and it is a pity that his pages are stained with the thumb-mark of lust.

His verses are mostly devoted to the topic of love. The effect of English poetry is perfectly plainly seen in his work. He was refined and sure in the music of his lines, and he seemed especially to like to write in the French ballade form, as in his *Oppressed Hairt* and in *Up Helsum Hairt.* He has two specimens of the six-lined stanza devised by the troubadours, which, coming across the Border northward out of England became the notable stanza of Burns, identified, indeed, entirely with the Scottish vernacular muse. Especially in his *Wha Lykis to Luve*, and *Favoure is Fair*, and *I Will Be Plane*, is the rhythmical and rhyming ease of Scott well displayed, proving the influence of Skelton and others. His facile mastery of musical verse is strikingly clear in the *Rondel of Lufe*:

"Lo quhat it is to lufe,
Lerne ye that list to prufe,
Be me, I say, that no wayis may
The grund of greif remuve,
Bot still decay both nycht and day:
Lo quhat it is to lufe.

"Lufe is ane fervent fyre,
Kendillit without desyre;
Schort plesour, lang displesour,
Repentance is the hyre,
Ane pure tressour without mesour:
Lufe is ane fervent fyre."

His *Jousting at the Drum* is an imitation of *Christis Kirk on the Grene*. None of his poems were written later than 1568, for the Bannatyne manuscript, in which is found all that is extant of his work, to the number of thirty-six poems, belongs to that year. It is possible to fix some time-tags into his life. His *Lament for the Maister of Erskyn* must date about 1547, when that young favourite of the queen was slain at Pinkie:

"Departe, departe, departe,
Allace! I most departe
From hir that hes my hart,
With hairt full soir,
Aganis my will in deid,
And can find no remeid:
I wait the pains of deid
Can do no moir.

"Adew, my ain sueit thing,
My joy and conforting,
My mirth and sollesing
Of erdly gloir:
Fair weill, my lady bricht,
And my remembrance rycht;
Ffair weill and haif gud nycht:
I say no moir."

think

His poem *Of May* must have been written before the Reformation, as it speaks of the crowds of pilgrims frequenting the famous shrine of Loretto in Musselburgh, and also of the pageant of Robin Hood and Little John, which, with kindred representations, was forbidden in 1555 by the Scottish parliament. The only other poem which can have a date fixed to it is that which is entitled *Ane New Yeir Gift to the Queen Mary, quhen scho come first Hame*, 1562.

His verse is sparkling and superficial rather than shining with the light that is within; and his love is not

serious; but he is a consummate artist. Witness verse like this:

"Oppressit hairt indure
In dolour and distress,
Wappit without recure
In wo remidiless.
Sen scho is merciless,
And caussis all thy smert,
Quhilk suld thy dolour dress,
Indure, oppressit hairt."

Tradition and his own poems, with scant references in records, are all our authority for Montgomerie's life. It is accepted that he was a younger son of the laird of Hazlehead, a branch of the Eglinton house. Timothy Pont is the authority for this in his *Cuningham Topographized*: 1545-1610.

"Hasilhead Castle a stronge old building, environed with large ditches, seatted one a loche, weill planted and comodiously beutified; the heritage of Robert Montgomery laird thereof. Faumes it is for ye birth of that renomet poet Alexander Montgomery."

Sir William Mure, author of *The True Crucifixe for True Catholickes*, and other works, in an address to Charles Prince of Wales, afterwards Charles I., says:

"Matchless Montgomery in his native tongue,
In former times to thy great Sire hath sung,
And often ravish'd his harmonious ear
With strains fit only for a prince to hear.
My Muse, which nought doth challenge worthy fame,
Save from Montgomery she her birth doth claim,
(Although his Phœnix ashes have sent forth
Pan for Apollo, if compared in worth),
Pretendeth title to supply his place
By right hereditar to serve thy grace."

Here he claims through his mother, a sister of the poet, who was married to Sir William Mure of Rowallan.

Montgomerie's poems reveal him as a man of highest education and refinement. He evidently had received some of his education in Argyleshire, for in scorn Polwart says, as if laughing at his education:

"Thou past baith poore and peild
Into Argyle, some lair to leir."

He was born on "Eister day at morne," but he does not mention the year. From his connection with Argyleshire he was sometimes styled "the Highland trooper." Dempster says of him:

"Eques Montanus vulgo vocatus, nobilissimo sanguine, Pindarus Scoticus, ingenii elegentia et carminis venustate nulli veterum secundus, regi charissimus Jacobo, qui poeticen mirifice eo aevo amplexabatur, quique poetas claros sodales suos vulgo vocari voluit, multis ingenii sui monimentis patriam linguam ditavit et exornavit: ad me, qui impubes patriam reliqui, paucorum notitia pervenit."

Too much is probably made of the phrase "Highland trooper," which may have been a simple allusion to the Celtic district of Ayrshire, to which he belonged.[1] The connection between Ayr and Argyle would be close enough to warrant the allusion. From several of his *Sonnets* we find that he fell into disgrace at court. Most of his poems are sweet and touching. He finds love pricking his hand but keeping the rose from him. His sarcasm may have estranged those who otherwise should at least have been friendly, while not his friends.

Though he served at the court of James VI., it is not known in what capacity. He knew at any rate how to charm that vain king's heart and head, which had always plenty of empty space for any one who so wished to fill them up. He received in 1583 an annual pension of five hundred marks, payable from the rents of the archbishopric of Glasgow. The king quoted his verses as examples to be followed, in his *Reulis and Cautelis to be observit and eschewit in Scottis Poesie*, chapter vii. It was, indeed, very clearly hinted that Montgomerie had more than a finger in the composition of this royal work, which was of pioneer value, putting Scotland into the position of having a theory of poetry of its own at a date earlier than England. William Webbe, the friend of Gabriel Harvey and Edmund Spenser, had in 1586 issued his *Discourse on English Poetrie*, dealing with the

[1] Even Drummond in writing of the Scottish rivers mentions the

"Irish Ryan,"

not from the fact that it lies towards Ireland, for the others he names do so likewise, but because of the Celtic blood and language of the people resident about it in Galloway. *See* p. 10.

proposed reform of metrical composition by quantity, as in Latin, in which Harvey had much interest. He added to his book a compendium of Horace's *Art of Poetry*, taken from George Fabricius of Kemnitz, a pre-eminent writer of Latin verse. In 1589 was published anonymously the better known *Art of English Poesie*, which in 1605 was attributed to George Puttenham, who had been a scholar of Oxford, had visited the courts of France, Spain, and Italy, and was expert in French, Italian, Spanish, Greek, and Latin. But James VI. was first in the field with his *Schort Treatise*, and must have been delighted with the thought that he had led the way, even though the others had probably heard neither of him nor his book. It was, of course, only a bit of " 'prentice " work, but it displayed knowledge of the subject, and was brimful of self-revelation of the Scottish Solomon.

Montgomerie evidently endured imprisonment somewhere, and had to retire under the cloud of royal disfavour from court. It was with a deep sense of injury that he did this. The statement of his restoration to favour, and the assertion that he passed into England with his king, have no authority. He had already tasted bitterness of disappointment over the withholding of his pension, in consequence of which he had had prolonged lawsuits in the Court of Session, which he has immortalised in the sarcasm of his verse. Of his later days, and where he spent them, no man knows anything, except that he was living in 1605, and dead before 1615, when his *Cherrie and the Slae* was printed by Hart, with a statement that it had been revised by him shortly before his death. His name is preserved by this poem.

The Cherrie and the Slae is, in its first part, a poem of love ; its second is charged with moral teaching. The poem is unique in its period as being pervaded with the spirit of Nature, in beautiful fields, in sun-filled woodlands, in wild and lonely places. Seldom until we come to Burns and Scott do we find so direct a picture filling the eye with the reality of Nature, the charm of the unfolding bud, the stillness, the sheen, and the verdant shadow, as in the following verses :

" About ane bank, quhair birdis on bewis
Ten thusand tymis thair notis renewis
Ilke houre into the day,
The merle and maueis micht be sene,
The Progne and the Phelomene,
Quhilk caussit me to stay.

I lay and leynit me to ane bus
To heir the birdis beir,
Thair mirth was sa melodius
Throw nature of the yeir :
Sum singing, sum springing
With wingis into the sky ;
So nimlie and trimlie
Thir birdis they flew me by. . . .

"The dew as diamondis did hing,
Vpon the tender twistis and ying,
Ouir-twinkling all the treis :
And ay quhair flowris flourischit faire,
Thair suddainly I saw repaire,
In swarmes, the sownding beis,
Sum sweitly hes the hony socht,
Quhil they war cloggit soir ; till
Sum willingly the waxe hes wrocht,
To heip it vp in stoir :
So heiping, with keiping,
Into thair hyuis they hyde it,
Precyselie and wyseli
For winter they prouyde it."

After such a close observation of the busy life in those remote places, he gives us a picture which is probably one of the first of its kind in Scottish poetry—the description of a waterfall, which at once suggests the companion picture in Burns's *Hallowe'en*.

"To pen the pleasures of that park,
How euery blossome, branch, and bark,
Agaynst the sun did schyne,
I leif to poetis to compyle
In staitlie verse and lofty style :
It passis my ingyne.
Bot, as I musit myne allane,
I saw ane river rin
Out ouir ane craggie rok of stane,
Syne lichtit in ane lin,
With tumbling and rumbling
Amang the rochis round,
Dewalling and falling
Into that pit profound.

"To heir thae startling stremis cleir,
Me thocht it musique to the eir
Quhair deskant did abound ; . . .
Quha wald haue tyrit to heir that tune,
Quhilk birdis corroborate ay abune,
Throw schowting of the larkis !"

Extremely characteristic in the same way, along the line of vision and clearness of imaginative pictorial presentment, is his song *Hay! Nou the Day Dauis.* A song which was popular in Gawain Douglas's day, and old then, is mentioned by him in his thirteenth prologue, 1512.

> "Thareto thir birdis singis in thare schawis,
> As menstralis playis, *The joly day now dawis.*"

Apparently the people had got tired of it, probably from hearing the town pipers skirling it in the morning to waken the sleepers. Thus Dunbar, in his sarcasm to the merchants of Edinburgh, says :

> "Your commone menstralis hes no tune,
> But *Now the day dawis,* and *Into Joun.*"

Montgomerie set to this ancient melody a new and very convincing song, in which he records the sounds of the awakening dawn, with the beauty of the gowans and dewy fields, as though he had drawn aside the misty veil of morning from our eyes.

"Hay ! nou the day dauis ;
The jolie Cok crauis ;
Hou shroudis the shauis,
Throu Natur anone.
The thissell-cok cryis
On louers vha lyis,
Nou skaillis the skyis :
The nicht is neir gone.

"The feildis ouerflouis
With gouans that grouis,
Quhair lilies lyk lou is,
Als rid as the rone. rowan
The turtill that true is,
With nots that reneuis,
Hir pairtie perseuis ;
The nicht is neir gone.

"Nou Hairtis with Hyndis,
Conforme to thair kyndis,
Hie tursis thair tyndis, toss their antlers
On grund vhair they grone.
Nou Hurchonis, with Hairis, hedgehogs
Ay passis in pairis ;
Quhilk deuly declaris
The nicht is neir gone."

It is perfectly clear that these lines were written by a man who had watched Nature's awakening with a loving gaze and sympathetic heart.

His miscellaneous poems have frequent marks of his suffering upon them, and are reminiscent of pain and hurt. His personality speaks most directly through his *Sonnets*, as courtier and lover, revealing without stint his friendships and enmities. Along with Dunbar, he has the distinction of having weightily affected the poetry of Ramsay and Burns, not only in spirit but in metrical form. In his work he shows very clearly the influence of Wyatt, Surrey, and Sidney, and wrote no fewer than 675 sonnets, most of which are translations or paraphrases of Ronsard. He gives in one of his sonnets a catalogue of his trials.

"If lose of guids, if gritest grudge or grief,
If povertie, imprisonment, or pane,
If for guid will ingratitude again,
If languishing in langour but relief, without
If det, if dolour, and to become deif,
If travell tint, and labour lost in vane,
Do properly to poets appertane—
Of all that craft my chance is to be chief.
With August, Virgill wauntit his reuard,
And Ovids lote als lukles as the lave;
Quhill Homer livd, his hap wes wery hard,
Zit, when he died, sevin cities for him strave:
Thoght I am not lyk one of thame in arte,
I pingle thame all perfytlie in that parte." compete with

Indebted to Chaucer, with traces of the influence of Dunbar and Lyndsay, he yet has individuality of genius, expression, and charm. His version of the Psalms was completed by Mure of Rowallan. He is of great interest, and deserves better of his countrymen than the neglect which has been his fate.

Especially noteworthy is a poem *Welcum to May*, which has been preserved in the Bannatyne manuscript, that fairy-godmother of so many children of song. This might well have been written by the same mind that, in *The Cherrie and the Slae*, heard in the running brook "a music sweeter than his own," and beheld in the day-touched meadows the "light that never was on sea or land."

"Be glaid all ze that luvaris bene,
For now hes May depaynt with grene
The hillis, valis, and the medis;
And flouris lustely vpspreidis,
Awalk out of zour sluggairdy, awake
To heir the birdis melody;
Quhois suggourit nottis loud and cleir
Is now ane parradice to heir.
Go walk vpoun sum rever fair;
Go tak the fresch and holsum air;
Go luke vpoun the flurist fell; flower strewn
Go feill the herbis plesand smell;
Quhilk will zour comfort gar incres,
And all avoyd zour havines.
The new cled purpour hevin espy,
Behald the lark now in the sky,
With besy wyng scho clymis on hicht,
For grit joy of the dayis licht. . . .
Luke or Phebus put vp his heid,
As he dois raiss his baneris reid;
He dois the eist so bricht attyre,
That all semis birnyng in a fyre;
Quhilk confort dois to every thing,
Man, bird, beist, and flurissing. . . . flowers
And euery man thank in his mynd
The God of natur and of kynd,
Quhilk ordanit all for our behufe,
The erd undir, the air abufe,
Bird, beist, flour, tyme, day and nycht,
The planeitis for to gif ws licht."

The footprints of Sir James Inglis may be traced at court across the page of the treasurer's accounts, but the jingle of the coin with which he was rewarded for his work at court plays and interludes is the only jingle that has come down to us, and it is quite apparent that, when he was elevated to the abbacy of Culross, he ceased to exercise any poetic gift he had. He may have had his hands, heart, and brain very fully occupied in putting affairs of the abbey into proper order. He was murdered on 1st March 1530 by Blackadder of Tulliallan. None of his "ballates, farses, and plesand playis" have endured the test of time, and he is only a name scrawled across the page by the hand of Lyndsay. In order to put something to his credit, it has been suggested that he wrote the *Complaynt of Scotland*, but there is no ground for this suggestion.

Writers on Scottish literature have had a weak habit of

walking about with the *Complaynt of Scotland*, and endeavouring to find some author upon whom they can fix it. Thus it has been attributed to Sir John Inglis, Chaplain of the Abbey of Cambuskenneth, who has been confused with Sir James Inglis, Abbot of Culross. Leyden thought it might have been done by Sir David Lyndsay, while Laing did all he could to get it accepted by Robert Wedderburn, Vicar of Dundee in 1553. Sir J. A. Murray, editing it for the Early Scottish Text Society, decided from internal evidence that the author was a partisan of the Guise party, that he was a Romish ecclesiastic, and that he was a native of the southern Lowlands, probably of the Border country. The book is dedicated to Mary of Guise, "the perle of princessis." The work is in reality an eclectic composition. It is now quite clear that the anonymous writer of this work found more than mere suggestion in a work of Alain Chartier of 1422, entitled *Le Quadrilogue Invectif*, the purport of which was to intensify and strengthen his countrymen's efforts for the expulsion of the English. The first chapter is Chartier's, in a Scottish clothing.

The causes of Scotland's complaint or sickness are three.

"The cruel inuasions of oure ald enemeis, the uniuersal pestilens and mortalite that hes occurit mercyles amang the pepil, and the contentions of diuerse of the thre estaitis of Scotlande, throucht the quhilk thre plagis, the uniuersal pepil ar be cum distitute of justice, policie, and of all verteus bysynes of body and saul."

Mary of Guise is evidently looked upon as the Lady of Deliverance. From the writer's acquaintance with a manuscript of Octavien St Gelais, Bishop of Angouleme, it may be that he was in the suite of Mary in France. The terrible trial of the defeat of Pinkie—

"the grite afflictione quhilk occurrit on oure realme in September MDXLVII zeirs, on the feildis besyde Mussilburgh,"

—seems to have impressed the writer's mind with the certainty of the vengeance of God upon national delinquencies. His only satisfaction comes from the belief that those heavy clouds are the shadows cast by the approaching of the end of the world, a frequent solution of historical despairs.

The most directly important part of the *Complaynt of*

Scotland is found in the sixth chapter, entitled "Ane Monolog of the Actor," where we have most interesting glimpses of the life and literature of the people. We have a description of a walk through the fields and woods. Here he also owes a deep debt to Alain Chartier. He describes the sounds that fill the air on the return of day.

"The chekyns began to peu quhen the gled quhissilit. The Fox followit the fed gese, ande garte them cry claik."

He sits down, of course, by the seaside, and a naval engagement begins immediately in front of him. The usual custom of his school is followed. All antiquity and cosmogony are dragged about his page, a shepherd describing the Ptolemaic system of astronomy, till even the shepherd's wife becomes very tired of it and proposes that

"Eurie ane of us tel ane gude tayl or fabil to pas the tyme quhil enyn."

The names of the stories and songs are of intense interest. The pity is that these were not themselves preserved. Chaucer, Ovid, *The Brus*, *Wallace*, *The Travels of Maundeville*, Gawain Douglas's *Palice of Honour*, Dunbar's *Goldin Targe*, the story of *Rauf Coilzear*, the tales of the Arthurian and Carolingian cycles, with other folk-tales as:

"The tayl of the reyde eyttyn vitht the thre heydes; The tayl of the wolfe of the varldis end; The tayl of the giantis that eit quyk men; The tayl of the thre futtit dog of Norrouay; Robene hude and litil Jhone,"

are all mentioned. Amongst the songs are *Cou Thou Me the Rashis Grene*, *The Frog came to the Myl-dur*, *The Battell of the Hayrlaw*, *The Huntis of Cheveut*. After the songs, the shepherds joined in dances.

"Euyrie ald scheiphyrd led his vyfe be the hand, and euyrie yong scheiphyrd led hyr quhome he luffit best."

The musical instruments were a drone bagpipe, a pipe "maid of ane bleddir and of ane reid," a "trumpe," a "cornepipe," a pipe "maid of ane gaithorne," a "recordar," a "fiddill," and a "quhissil." Some of the names of the dance tunes remain, and they represent a good enough repertoire: *The*

Northt of Scotland, Huntis up, Lang plat fut of gariau, Robene Hude, Thom of Lyn, Jhonne Ermistrangis Dance.[1]

"Actor" withdraws, and, falling asleep, dreams. Here also the writer is helped by Alain Chartier. He sees Dame Scotia, whose shield is crammed with heraldic emblems, in great distress, and from the condition of her three sons, who come in with her, she has every reason to be so. The first is

"traland ane halbert behynd hym, beand al affrayit and fleyit for dreddour of his lyve."

The second is

"clethed in ane sydegoune, kepand grite grauite, heffand ane beuk in his hand, the claspis var fast lokkyt vikht rouste,"

while the third in tatters rolls about in great distress,

"makkand ane dolorus lamentatione ande ane piteouse complaynt."

Scotia's complaint is that she is under the continual annoyance of England, her old enemy; that these sons of hers have lost all love of country, and all courage in her defence, while they have also lost all faith in one another. She tries to awaken these degenerates by ancient example, and without any attempt at accuracy in the matter of history, wanders from the wars of the Maccabees, taking in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, to Robert Bruce, who, according to her, had to flee to Norway for his life.[2] Her exhortation is absolutely acrid with hatred of England. The writer rises to a Miltonic power of statement, when, in referring to certain works which had been written to prove that Scotland was originally English property, he cried aloud, "Realmis ar nocht conquest be buikis, bot rather be bluid!" In regard to the prophecies about union with England, he denounces Merlin, whose sayings were much quoted at this time, as an "ald corruppit vaticinar." He has the sense to see that union will come by a quiet conquest from Scotland; but still he cannot help himself calling the English "auld subtill doggis." He, like so many others, forgets the composite descent of the Scotsman. Certainly this Lowland Teutonic Scot, who spoke of himself as being an enemy of England for twelve

[1] *See* Appendix I. p. 497.
[2] *See* p. 54.

hundred years by-past, was taking upon himself in that statement the burden of the ancient feud of the Gael against the Saxon.

In this work also we find the strong and deep growl of the Scottish peasant against his treatment between the upper and the lower mill-stones of the lairds and the church, just as we find it in Lyndsay. He objects to himself being included in the censure of his two brothers, and speaks like a man when he says:

"I may be comparit to the dul asse in sa far as I am compellit to bayr ane importabil byrdyng, for I am dung and broddit to gar me do and to thole the thing that is abuif my power."

He is squeezed till he is empty by the oppression of the lazy, till he is naked by the extortion of the greedy, and till he is homeless through the grabbing selfishness of his landlords. His biggest enemies are those of his own blood.

"My tua brethir, nobilis and clergie, quhilk suld defend me, tha ar cruel contrar me nor is my ald enemis of Ingland. . . . I am exilit fra ma takkis and fra my steddyngis. The malis and fermis of the grond that I laybyr is hychtit to sic ane price, that it is forste me and vyf and bayrns to drynk vattir. The teyndis of my cornis ar nocht alanerly hychtit abufe the fertilitie that the gronde maye bayr, bot as veil thai are tane furtht of my handis be my tua tirran brethir."

Even war for the defence of Scotland's rights means devastation of the property of the poor. He has his own political opinions, some of which are finding more than voice only in our day. He knows the value of the working class as a fundamental strength of the state. He thinks they are

"ane notabill membyr of ane realme, witht out the quhilk the nobillis and clergy can nocht sustene ther stait nor ther lyif."

He mourns the lack of representation in the senate of the state. He has found, in fact, in this early period, a crofter question, a Land Bill propaganda, and a franchise agitation, all in one. His cry did not find practical embodiment until three hundred years later. This Scottish peasant, speaking from the page of the *Complaynt of Scotland*, has a ring of genuine indignation in his tones. He shows that he has been thrust from his position of elder son to that of meanest

in the family. He sees, what now we see more and more, that the land question is the fundamental question of the welfare of the people. He proves that the man of the soil was a father and ancestor of the race. He appeals to what was embodied across the border in the protest of John Ball, who roused the labourers of England with his distich:

> "When Adam delved and Eve span,
> Who was then the gentleman?"

The answer which Scotia gives is very straight and to the purpose, but from the patrician point of view. She blames the common people for their lack of restraint, for their ignorant violence, their suspicion of those that would help them; all of which have thrust far away almost even the remembrance of the golden age, when peace, justice, and contentment were on the earth. Nevertheless, she finds that her reply has awakened strong manifestations of democratic radicalism in the utterance of the representative of peasant Scotland. He declares:

> "The sone of ane prince beand distitut of vertu is no gentil man; ande in opposit, ane sone of ane mechanyc plebien, beand verteous, he is ane gentil man. . . .
> "Quhen the corrupit flesche is consumit fra the banis, no man can put defferens betuix ane prince and ane begger."

The extravagance, greed, and strife of the nobles are the causes of Scotland's weaknesses, declares the peasant, and if she looks not to it the hosts of England will come in and possess her land. He deals also with the faults of the clergy. He sees the hopelessness of crushing heresy by persecution,

> "for, as sune as ther is ane person slane, brynt, or bannest, for the halding of peruerst opinions, incontinent ther rysis up thre in his place."

It is as intensely national as any manifesto of the Young Scots' Society could be. While he protests against the treatment of the monks, the desolation of the monasteries, and the sacrilegious conduct of Henry VIII., he yet acknowledges and bewails the corruption of the church to which he evidently belongs, and he calls upon the monks and clergy to arm themselves and come into the field to fight against

the common enemy for the sake of the commonweal. Yet, while this writer claims the future on behalf of the commonalty, he still has a hungering and peculiarly Scottish glance over his shoulder for the days that were. He was walking too deeply in the distress of his time to be fully aware of his road. Had his warlike advice been accepted by his country it would have been plunged for generations into the worst darkness, anarchy, and poverty; and although the *Complaynt of Scotland* is to be accepted on the whole as the true voice of the nation's suffering, its author is, and ever was, limited to his own horizon, and blinded to what would have been the intensified hate, the continuous conflict, and the impoverishment of Scotland, under the continuous warfare which would have ensued, had his counsel been followed.

Of other poets of the period, some have left little more than their name and memory, though probably accident and not genius has saved them from oblivion. Alexander Arbuthnot, who was made Principal of King's College, Aberdeen, in 1569, was notable for his character and scholarship. He was of the family of Arbuthnot of that ilk, in Kincardineshire, and studied law in France. Shortly after his return, however, he left the profession of advocate and entered the church. Spottiswoode said of him that, when he became Principal of King's College, he not only through his diligence and wisdom revived the "study of good letters, but gained many from the superstitions whereunto they were given." As an ecclesiastic, he was considered sound and prudent, and of such value to the University of Aberdeen that, when one of the churches of St Andrews wanted him, the king himself intervened and prevented his removal. Spottiswoode says he was "pleasant and jocund, and in all sciences expert, a good poet, philosopher, and lawyer, and in medicin skilful." Amongst so many attainments probably his poetry suffered. It does not do to plant trees too closely in one enclosure. He was certainly out of the common in choosing as the subject of one of his poems the praises of women, the poetic fashion of the day being the very reverse. It seems to be a reply to the commoner kind of poem on this subject.

"Quha dewlie wald decerne
The nature of gud wemen,
Or quha wald wis or yairne
That cumlie clan to ken,

He hes grit neid, I say indeid,
Of toungis ma then ten:
That plesand sort ar al confort
And mirrines to men.

. . . . . .

"Ane luifing wicht, bayth fair and bricht,
Gud properteis anew,
Freind with delyte, fo but dispyte;
Quho luves hir sall not rew."

Robert Sempill, who was in Paris at the time of the massacre of St Bartholomew in 1572, wrote the *Regentes Tragedy*, in which he laments the death of Moray, and *Ane Complaint upon Fortoun*, in which he commemorates the fate of Morton.

1530-1595.

Robert Sempill has left more verse than Arbuthnot. He has been confused with Lord Semple, but without justification. It might be said of him that he has come down as a poet simply because he writes verse in the ordinary fashion, for there is neither lift, rhythm, or vision in what survives of his work. His *Sege of the Castel of Edinburgh*, and his *Legend of the Lymmaris Lyfe*, which was an attack on Archbishop Adamson, give us examples both of his flatness and of his bitterness. It is said that a play by him was performed before the regent and the nobility in January 1568. If this be the comedy of *Philotus*, described as "ane verie excellent and delectabill treatise," he must have, like other and greater poets, adapted the latest edition to altered circumstances, for in solicitude for the safety of the king the regent is ignored. This play, edited for the Bannatyne Club in 1835, is, however, believed to be an anonymous production which owes a liberal debt to Barnabe Rich, and deals with the problem of matrimony between youth and age. It gives valuable glimpses of the way in which a lady spent her day.

Fowler, parson of Hawick, translated some verses of Petrarch. He describes himself as "P. of Hauicke," which has been interpreted as meaning "Parson." He completed a translation of the *Triumphs of the most famous Poet, Mr Frances Petrarke*, to which was prefixed a commendatory poem by King James himself. The dedication is dated 17th December 1587.

Amongst the translators of the Italian poets, who now were

securing attention in Scotland, was Stewart of Baldynneis, who wrote an abridgment of Ariosto's *Roland Furious*, the manuscript of which is in the Advocates' Library. It is the product of a kind of Scottish Euphuism, pedantically running after French phrases. It is not really a translation, but a verse paraphrase, got up in a kind of Italian masquerade. Devoid of imagination, he saunters along, keeping a straight enough road of level rhythm and rhyme. The following quaint exercise of alliterative ingenuity, suggested probably by the method of some of the Hebrew Psalms, which he calls *Ane Literall Sonnet*, displays his industry in the art of verse:

"Dull dolor dalie dois delyt destroy,
Vill vantith vit, vaist vorn vith vickit vo,
Cair cankert causith confortles conwoy,
Seueir sad sorrow scharplie schoris so,
My myrthles mynd may meruell monie mo.
Promp peirles proper plesand perll preclair,
Fair fremmit freind, firm fellest frownyng fo,
Rythche rubie, rycht renownit, royall, rair,
Send succor soone, so suadge sall sourest sair:
Grant griwous gronyng gratious guerdon guid.
For fauor flowing from fresche faces fair,
Restoris rychtlie restles rancor ruid;
Bot beutie, breding bittir bondin baill,
Dois dalie deedlie duynyng dartis daill."

John Burell, an Edinburgh burgess, wrote at this time an allegory entitled *The Passage of the Pilgremer*. He also wrote in rhyme *The Description of the Queens Maiesties maist Honorable Entry into the Tovn of Edinburgh, vpon the* 19 *day of Maii* 1590. If his description be true, it is interesting to observe how the procession was led by the instruments of which this prosaic poet takes note.

"Organs and regals thair did carpe
With thair gay golden glittring strings,
Thair wes the hautbois and the harpe,
Playing maist sweit and pleasant springs;
And sum on lutis did play and sing,
Of instruments the onely king.

"Viols and virginals were heir,
With girchorns maist iucundious;
Trumpets and timbrels maid gret beir
With instruments melodious,
The seistar and the sumphion,
With clarche, pipe, and clarion."

John Napier of Merchistoun, the inventor of logarithms, whereby he has achieved perhaps sufficient immortality for one man, also wrote in verse an exposition of the Book of Revelation.

1550-1617.

Alexander Hume, brother of the "Polwart" who figured in the *Flyting* with Montgomerie, was minister of Logie, near Stirling. His poems, which were published in 1599, made no small claim upon the attention of the world, in their title-page, "wherein the right use of Poesie may be espied." They are of a moral and religious nature. The most notable is perhaps that named *Of the Day Estivall.*[1] The following verses show his power of observation:

1560-1609.

"The shadow of the earth anon
Remooues and drawes by,
Sine in the east, when it is gon,
Appeares a clearer sky.

"Quhilk sune perceaues the little larks,
The lapwing and the snyp,
And tunes their sangs, like Nature's clarks
Our midow, mure and stryp. . . .

"The ample heaven of fabrik sure,
In cleannes dois surpas
The chrystall and the siluer pure,
Or clearest poleist glas.

"The time sa tranquill is and still,
That na where sall ye find,
Saife on ane high and barren hill,
Ane aire of peeping wind.

"All trees and simples great and small,
That balmie leife do beir,
Nor thay were painted on a wall,
Na mair they move or steir.

. . . . . .

"Sa silent is the cessile air,
That euery cry and call,
The hils, and dails, and forrest fair
Again repeates them all.

"The rivers fresh, the callor streames, fresh
Our rockes can softlie rin:
The water cleare like chrystall seames,
And makes a pleasant din. . . ."

[1] Summer.

"What pleasure were to walke and see,
Endlang a river cleare,
The perfit forme of euerie tree
Within the deepe appeare. . . ."

He stumbles further than a good many of his craft over a simple line into the abyss of bathos:

"That gaue thy seruant Dauid king
A scepter for a staffe,
Syne made him sacred Psalmes to sing,
A hundreth and a halfe."

He could speak plainly and fearlessly his opinion of his time, and especially of the Scottish court.

"I neede not now sick properties apply,
Thou knawes our Scottish court als weill as I.
Our princes ay, as we haue heard and sein,
Thir mony yeares infortunat hes bein,
And if I sould not speike with flattring tung,
The greater part bot sluggishly hes rung.
Our erles and lords, for their nobilitie,
How ignorant and inexpert they be,
Upon the priuie counsell mon be chused
Or else the king and councill ar abused,
And if the prince augment not ay their rents,
Quhat is their mair? they will be mal-contents. . . .
Sum officers we se of naughtie braine,
Meere ignorants, proud, visious, and vaine,
Of learning, wit, and vertue all denude,
Maist blockish men, rash, riotous, and rude,
And flattering fallowis oft ar mair regarded;
A lying slaue will rather be rewarded,
Nor they that dois with reasons rule conferre
Thair kinde of life and actions, least they erre,
Nor men discreit, wise, vertous, and modest,
Of galland spreit, braue, trew and worthie trest. . . .
Bot in effect compare them weill I may
Till images quhilks ar in temples set:
Decorde without, and all with gold ou'rfret,
With colors fine, and carued curiouslie,
The place where they are set to beautifie;
Bot when they are remarked all and sum,
They are bot stocks and stains, bos, deid, and dum."

Alexander of Menstrie, afterwards Earl of Stirling, was a friend and parishioner of Hume. In the will of the Minister

of Logie, in connection with this friendship, there is a touch humour :

"Item ; I leave to the rycht honourabill the guidman of Menstrie that buik callit Cornelius Agreppa, quhilk he hes of myne."

It was a very kindly way of saying farewell for ever to a borrowed article no longer to be required by the owner.

The poetical feeling of the Humes passed on through Scottish literature to Lady Grizel Baillie, who was Hume's great-grand-niece.

James Melville, nephew of Andrew Melville, the great Presbyterian leader, amongst the most notable of Scottish churchmen, wrote in his banishment at Berwick certain verse paraphrases of the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and the Commandments, moving on the mechanism of allegory, with other matters which bear about them little proof of the divine efflatus.

1556-1614.

Another parson, William Lauder, minister of Forgandenny, wrote in 1556, in limping verse, *Ane compendious and breve Tractate concernynge ye office and deutie of Kingis, Spirituall Pastoris, and Temporall Jugis.*

One of the earliest poetesses of Scotland, Elizabeth Melville, better known as Lady Culross, her husband having, in 1640, succeeded to the title, though he did not assume it, as he did not have means equivalent to the burden involved, was a writer of pious verse. Her *Godlie Dreme* was highly spoken of. It consisted of four hundred and eighty verses, which impressed Dr Armstrong, probably by its harrowing description of hell. One of her younger sons was also a political scribbler.

James Cockburne wrote *Gabriels Savtation to Marie*, and *Judas Kisse to the Sonne of Marie.* These subjects exceeded his qualifications.

Muschet, minister of Dunning in Perthshire, in his *Complaint of a Christian Sovle*, is worthy only of record because he is of equal merit with those others.

Alexander, Earl of Glencairn, was of greater value as a churchman and reformer than as a poet. John Rolland of Dalkeith, with his *Sevin Sages*, and the *Court of Venus* in four books, modelled on the *Palice of Honour*, requires no more than mention.

Sir Richard Maitland, lawyer and laird, began to write when he was sixty years of age. He was blind from about 1561, in which year, as Lord Lethington, he took his seat upon the bench, but he had mental vision which enabled him to see, more than many of his compeers, the condition and necessities of his country. He held aloof from politics, and, without being a Scottish Vicar of Bray, maintained his position as judge through many changes of party, and was allowed to hold the wages of his office until he died. In 1552 and 1559 he acted on the commission for settling with England sundry matters regarding the Debateable Land. He knew the Border habits. His poems, *Aganis the Oppressioun of the Comounis*, and *Aganis the Theivis of Liddisdaill*, straight things that sound like the slap of a hand, make us open our eyes to the state of Scotland at that time. The latter especially is a real footnote to history. 1496-1586.

"Thay theifs that steillis and tursis hame — carry off
Ilk ane of them has ane to-name; — nick-name
Will of the Lawis,
Hab of the Schawis;
To mak bair wawis,
They thinke na schame.

"Thay spuilye puir men of their pakis,
Thay leif them nocht on bed nor bakis;
Baith hen and cok,
With reil and rok,
The Lairdis Jok
All with him takis.

"They leif not spindell, spoone, nor speit,
Bed, bolster, blanket, sark, nor sheit,
Johne of the Parke
Ryps kist and ark.
For all sic wark
He is richt meit."

He longs for the old times when there was merrymaking, "blitheness, dancing, singing, game, and play."

"And we hald nather Yule nor Pace,
Bot seik our meit from place to place;
And we haive nather luk nor grace;
We gar our landis dowbill pay;
Our tennentis cry, 'Alace! Alace!
That routh and pittie is away!'

"Now we haive mair, it is weill kend,
Nor our forbearis had to spend;
Bot far les at the yeiris end;
And never hes ane mirrie day:
God will na ryches to us send,
Sua lang as honour is away."

The summary of his philosophy is extremely practical:

"Quhen I have done considder
This warldis vanitie,
Sa brukill and sa slidder
Sa full of miserie;
Then I remember me,
Their heir thair is no rest;
Thairfoir, appeirantlie,
To be mirrie is best."

He finds it difficult to please everybody.

"Gif ye be blythe, your lychtnes thai will lak;
Gif ye be grave, your gravite is clekit;
Gif ye lyk musik, mirthe, or myrrie mak,
Thai sweir ye feill ane string and bownie to brek it;
Gif ye be seik, sum slychtis ar suspectit,
And all your sairris callit secret swynyeis; excuses
Dais thai dispyte, and be ye daylie deckit
Persave, thei say, the papingo that prwnzeis. preens

"Gif ye be wyis, and weill in vertu versit,
Cwnning thai call uncwmlie for your kynd,
And sayis it is bot slychtis ye have seirsit,
To cloil the crafte quhairte ye ar inclynd; hide
Gif ye be meik, yit thai mistak your mynd,
And sweiris ye ar far schrewdar nor ye seme:
Swa do your best, thus sall ye be defynd,
And all your deidis sall detractourise deme."

There is a quiet, sententious humour about his verses often very reminiscent of Dunbar, as, for example, in *Na Kindness at Court without Siller*:

"Sumtyme to Court I did repair,
Thairin sum errandis for to dress,
Thinkand I had sum friendis thair
To help fordwart my buseness:
But, nocht the les,
I fand nathing but dubilness;
Auld kyndnes helpis nocht ane hair. . . .

"I wend that he in word and deid
For me, his kynsman, sould have wrocht:
Bot to my speiche he tuke na heid:
Neirnes of blude he sett at nocht. . . ."

The suitor, however, remembered that money had powers of greater strength than blood-kin or friendship, and found this to be so:

> "Thairfoir, my friendis, gif ye will mak
> All courte men youris as ye wald,
> Gude gold and silver with you tak;
> Than to get help ye may be bald;
> For it is tald
> Kyndness of courte is coft and sald;
> Neirnes of kyn na-thing thai rak."

Maitland's most valuable work was his manuscript wherein he compiled Scottish poetry between 1555 and 1586, a work in which he was rivalled by George Bannatyne, who, in 1568, busied himself in Edinburgh during the plague with a similar industry, he himself being a writer of verse much worse than that of others which he preserved. To Bannatyne's industry we owe it that Alexander Scott's verses had not wholly disappeared.

CHAPTER XII

BALLAD POETRY

One of the most striking phenomena of Scottish literature is the rich heritage of ballad poetry which has come down through the ages in more or less direct and completed form, carrying with it passion, struggle, pathos, and melody, broken scraps of history permeated with a deep and very true humanity—everything, in fact, except the names of the authors. They have about them a unique aroma, a feeling of lonely places and of lonely lives. They are the bluebell and the whin of the poetic growth of Scotland, and may be safely taken as the survival of a much larger volume of utterance. In Barbour's *Brus*, for example, he says, after mentioning how Sir John de Soulis, with fifty men, defeats a squadron of three hundred, under Sir Andra de Harcla,

> "I wil nocht rehers the maner,
> For quhasa likis, tha may her
> Yhoung wemen, quhan the wil pla,
> Sing it amang them ilke day."

This gives a hint of the fate of many a stirring tale of daring, lost for ever, or only lingering in a rugged line or two.

As to the source of these ballads, of course, little can be known. It is impossible to trace them to their beginnings. They have passed through innumerable hands, and been hammered on countless anvils. Nevertheless, they all point back to the unquestionable existence of a protoform, out of which each minstrel tore, or hewed, and carried away what his circumstances required.

The riddle of the origin of ballads is, indeed, amongst the most difficult in the world. Two answers have been suggested, and each one has so much of truth in it as to present difficulty in its being considered the final solution. The first is that

they arose from the natural spontaneity of vocal accompaniments to folk-dances, the rhythm of the dancing feet suggesting choruses and refrains, and finally romantic story. The second is that they were created by a cult of bards, jongleurs, and wandering tale-tellers. The former of these is not by any means entirely right, if indeed right at all. The verbal accompaniment to communal dancing would never take the form of a lengthy romance. One can understand residuary broken verses or rudimentary refrains such as *Here we go round the Mulberry Bush*, or *Round the Merry May Tanzie*, or, similarly, one can appreciate in some of the simple acted games of the people, fragments that suggest romantic situations, as in *How many Miles to Babylon?* An origin such as this, however, from which should spring ballads real, passionate, and rare, could only be based on a very shadowy hypothesis. The reverse process might be argued more plausibly; and, indeed, one may frequently to-day hear in village games a stanza of an old ballad chanted by the children at a crisis of their sport. The theory itself comes, indeed, from the meaning of the old word "ballad," which is allied with dancing. Certainly in some games there might be opportunity for acting a little drama, when the two sides walk up and confront each other, joining in rude dialogues. Still, the gulf between that and a thing like the *Dowie Dens of Yarrow*, *Edom o' Gordon*, and *Kinmont Willie*, is not only deep but wide. It is true that primitive peoples, such as the native Australians, accompany their dances with song. The familiar origin of the Greek drama at once occurs. The Greeks and Russians still have the habit of the folk-dance with accompaniment of improvised song. The Gael of our own country used the same labour-helping device in waulking cloth, in reaping harvests, and in pulling the heavy oar, the primitive tale, often almost unpremeditated, lifting the burden of labour as with magic from the hearts of the weary. Even to such origins may be attributed certain artifices of rhythm and rhyme. The Syrian peasants in their national dances have the "debka" or loop-dance, during which the performers link themselves together by their little fingers, and the strophes are looped together in the same way, the last words of one verse being repeated as the first of the next, an artifice which is found in the ballads of our own land.

The change which came over the country in the Middle Ages resulted in the evolution of a professional poet class, who sang their own verses; and the ballad would easily take the place of the rude archaic drama in the village festival. The truth is, that the ballad shows trace of both of these influences. It is distinctly rooted in folk-song, while at the same time it has a certain technique which lifts it above the category of dance rhymes. It depends at its best on a higher origin than the rollicking kick of the heels of merry peasants. In fact, not one specimen that has survived is without a verse or a line which contains a mystic touch inexplicable, a word or a phrase which acts as though a curtain had been drawn aside for a moment between the visible and the eternal.

When the church triumphed over minstrelsy it drove the minstrel down amongst the people, and the romantic tale of ancient times turned from the castle to the cottage and the farm environment of simple hearts which proved a most fruitful field for the growth of the ballad. But degeneration was the minstrel's doom, until he became, as some of us remember, the hoarse-voiced singer of the latest execution, or some old grey tottering chanter whose quavering tones recounted, in uncertain recitative, to the hinds of the village fair, the loves and sorrows, the daring and romance of forgotten sons and daughters of the long ago. There are, no doubt, "songs composed by the people for the people, handed down by oral tradition, and in style, taste, and even incident, common to the people in all European countries." How the seed of these fell, and from whose lips it fell, into the field of the *Volks-leider*, no man now can say.

The popular ballads have certain universal marks, such as those detailed by Monsieur Ampere in 1852, in his instructions to the committee looking for ballad remains in France. These include assonance, instead of rhyme, which is the product of a later culture; repetitions, as in Homer, of phrases and verses; the attribution of splendour to the possessions and properties of common life; bird messengers; metamorphic magic; manifestations of the elf and fairy world; and the recurrence of certain numbers to which superstition has attached mysterious powers. The sheen of gold and silver shimmers through the ancient tales. The dead sleep brokenly, hearing the weeping of their children, and riding forth from

death's dark house to touch again the life they left behind them. Lang truly and finely says:

"Ballads sprang from the very heart of the people, and flit from age to age, from lip to lip of shepherds, peasants, nurses, of all the class that continues nearest to the state of natural men. They make music with the plash of the fisherman's oars and the hum of the spinning-wheel, and keep time with the step of the ploughman as he drives his team. The country seems to have aided man in their making; the bird's note rings in them, the tree has lent her whispers, the stream its murmur, the village-bell its tingling tune. The whole soul of the peasant class breathes in their burdens as the great sea resounds in the shells cast up on the shores. Ballads are a voice from secret places, from silent peoples, and old times long dead; as such they stir us in a strangely intimate fashion to which artistic verse can never attain."

Yet they must have owed their origin to some individual who could suggest them to the folk-singers—the reminiscence of the lay of a wandering minstrel, who sang and passed upon his way, the broken memory of some returned campaigner, or a pilgrim, who by camp-fire or in hospice had heard what in some fragment still clung to his heart and brain. Lang later refuses the communal theory, and thinks rightly that there must have been an original author, though his work is now only a lonely thing of shreds and patches.

The excellent function of the minstrel in the fifteenth century was that he carried the precious secret of song through the lives and homes of the people, and kept the flame of poetry unextinguished in our land.

There is material for purposes of comparison in the traditional deposit of other nations. The possible plot and motif of romance being after all presentable in only a few aspects, the romantic traditions of all nations very frequently appear to be the reminiscences of a family scattered abroad during the making of their history. It was not till the appearance of Ramsay's *Evergreen*, *The Tea-Table Miscellany*, and Percy's *Reliques*, that interest was sufficiently stirred to try to recover from the fading memories and trembling lips of those who still had traces of them, the fragments of English and Scottish ballad minstrelsy. Unfortunately the functions of a critic were not clearly known or formulated, and Percy frequently wrote a whole ballad on an ancient text, a few lines or verses being sufficient for him to sew on to it a pretty

large garment of his own, while Scott did not hesitate to darn huge rents in the web which came to him.

In 1769 appeared *Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs*, which included certain ancient ballads, re-issued with additions in 1776. Pinkerton in 1783, Ritson in 1796, and Johnson from 1786 to 1803, included in their collections several specimens of the ancient stuff, the last-named having in his work the help of Burns. But Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* in 1801 struck the clearest note of influence for the ballad.

The naïve confessions, far too frequent, of "doctoring," and sometimes of creation, of verse antiques in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, make curious reading. Sir Walter had only to print a rolling line or a haunting phrase and label it with a quaint name for the world to put it carefully, like a rosemary leaf, into the volume of treasured remembrance. But he himself was not infrequently deceived. There is little doubt that this was so—indeed, it is evident that he suspected it—in the case of *The Twa Corbies*, sent him by "Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, Esq., Jun., of Hoddam, as written down, from tradition, by a lady." Though one of the most weirdly powerful creations of old-world tragedy, it is quite plainly built upon the ancient dirge, *The Three Ravens*, printed by Ritson in 1792, from Ravenscroft's *Melismata; Musical Phansies, fitting the Cittie and Countrie Humours to Three, Four, and Five Voyces, London*, 1611. Sir Walter was painfully deceived by his friend Surtees, who sent him the very beautiful *Barthram's Dirge*, as taken down "from the recitation of Anne Douglas, an old woman who weeded in his garden." It is as direct in its pathos as any ballad could be, but its voice is essentially modern, though Mr Surtees supplied careful notes identifying localities and incidents.

> "They shot him dead at the Nine-Stone Rig,
> Beside the Headless Cross,
> And they left him lying in his blood
> Upon the moor and moss."

Bishop Percy's *Reliques* set many collectors stirring, and the difficulty which emerges is that so many discoveries were of date subsequent to his publication, and frequently consisted of only a few verses supplementary to his versions, all the more remarkable since these had been already received from Scottish sources. Scotland was considered, probably by

everybody except old Dr Johnson, as the home of floating verse-trove steeped in the blood of ancient strife.

It was unfortunate for the Scottish ballads that so many who collected such things were able to write creditable verse, while the master of romance himself was the head of the enterprise. A talented metal-smith like Benvenuto Cellini would not secure such implicit faith in discoveries of beaten silver antiquities, as another who was well known to be quite unable even to hammer out a sixpence into a finger-ring. The unfortunate thing is, of course, that no ballad needed in any way to suffer from its deficiencies so long as the skilled hand of the wizard was ready. Credulity is the smallest charge which can be made against collectors and imparters of ballads in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Hogg had only to go to Sir Walter with the statement that "an old woman in Yarrow had recited this or that," in order to have it accepted by the master, whose ideas of editing, though perfectly honest in intention, were yet entirely different from the critical notions of to-day. It was in consequence of this that when the question as to the antiquity of the ballads arose in serious enquiry, Chambers was quite ready to attribute most of them to Lady Wardlaw, whose *Hardyknute*, while a good but obvious imitation, was its own sufficient answer to the suggestion.

An example of the method of editing is found most strikingly in the ballad of *Otterburn*. "The hands are the hands of Esau; but the voice is the voice of Jacob." Hogg sent some verse to Scott with the statement that he had got the whole ballad from a "crazy old man, and a woman deranged in her mind." Very few of the sources are more closely identified than that. How different was it with Campbell's *Tales of the West Highlands*, and many cases in the *Report of the Highland Society* on the authenticity of Ossian. But Hogg further states that both of his authorities had failed him at the best bit, so he had been compelled to take it down in plain prose, which he himself transformed into verse. Now, the unfortunate thing is that this is just the finest bit of the ballad. In Herd's version there are only two stanzas for the eight of Sir Walter's. The second of Herd's says:

"Earl Douglas said to Sir Hugh Montgomery,
Tak' thou the vanguard of the three,
And bury me at yon bracken bush,
Which stands upon yon lily lea."

When this passes through the hands of Hogg and Scott it becomes finely transfigured :

> "My wound is deep, I fain would sleep,
> Tak thou the vanguard of the three ;
> And hide me by the bracken bush
> That grows on yonder lily lea."

While *The Minstrelsy* version goes on :

> "O bury me by the bracken bush
> Beneath the blooming brier ;
> Let never a living mortal ken
> That e'er a kindly Scot lies here."

Now, how much of this is justifiable in editorial work, and whether it can be considered restoration at all, does not seem to be open to dispute. We have heard of a picture restorer who received a Titian to clean, and who painted the rising sun in the corner ; it was not considered a legitimate method of employing his opportunities. There is no doubt whatever that Scott's method was a mistake, although his consummate skill imparted an atmosphere of unspeakable glamour to some of the fragments which lingered about the farmhouse firesides in remote Border places ; but the world accepted the results as being the genuine remains of the life of ancient times. We should have been as much interested in the actual scraps, limping and broken-voiced, yet nevertheless eloquent of the rude, brave days of old. One who is interested in antiquities would find more charm in the rusty blade of a genuine Andrea Ferrara just as it has been found in the grave where the brave right hand had crumbled beside it, rather than if it had been gilded, enamelled, or completed very skilfully, with the broken pieces welded together with gold. It is open to argument as to whether the old ballad, after passing through the infirmary at Abbotsford, is to be preferred to the limping, blood-stained, moss-trooping thing telling its story with stammering tongue. It is a true enough picture, but it is not the genuine antique. At the same time it must be remembered, in regard to every one of the workers in this and similar fields, that their day was not ready for the unadorned and undressed archaic ; and had they given this to the public they would not have found readers.

Jamieson was notable for his theory that the Scottish minstrelsy had a common origin with the Scandinavian

ballad stores. In proof of this suggestion he translated from Scandinavian sources certain legendary compositions, and set alongside of them Scottish ballads; but it did not occur to any contemporary to ask him where he got the Scottish ballads, and it might sometimes reasonably seem that the theory and the illustration had the same mind for source.

The question as to whether the ballad-story had a literary or a popular origin is what every critic desires to answer. Many stories, even to-day, are world-wide. It was necessary for a teller of tales to be acquiring additions to his stock, and the passing of the Crusaders undoubtedly wore pathways over Europe for the bringing together of a common stock, not only of European, but of oriental romance. We know that a caste of minstrels did exist; that they wandered from town to town, from court to court, and from castle to castle. The street-corner, the market-place, and the rough homes of the people knew them. They stood apart from the poets of polished verse, who were the companions and friends of nobles and of monarchs. To assert that all popular ballad minstrelsy was a degradation of the great romantic tales is not tenable. There are, however, certain great trees in the garden of romance whose roots seem to penetrate into all lands, and the ballads of weird superstition and elfin glamour are like leaves which the wind blows from these throughout the world. The story of Arthur spread thus everywhere, and in such a ballad as *King Arthur and King Cornwall*, you find all that is left of a production made out of crumbs that fell or were swept from the table of the *chanson de geste*. You find there a literary or professional minstrel creation, worn down by its journeyings, and degraded by the company it has kept. Genius is sporadic in its manifestation, and here and there a man of the people, whose imagination has been touched by one of the great stories of romantic times, or by the suggestiveness of some old folk-relique of popular magic, has invincibly taken the incidents, passed them through the crucible of his own thought, and given to his clan and district a ballad, which in some form has survived until the modern ballad-fisher caught it in his net.

The origin of the ballad must be considered in the light of the peasant poetry of Europe, and the oral literature of primitive and uncivilized people, among whom to-day may be seen in operation the same influences which acted in our

own land long ago in the production of our ballad stores. Many of the ballads, by passing on to the page of the popular broadsheet, losing thereby the living force of the *raconteur*, lost also the charm of the repeated touch of the imagination kindled by the listening circles of the market-place or kitchen ingle. As Jeanroy says:

"If, by the phrase 'popular poetry' is meant simply productions emanating, without doubt, from individual poets possessed of a certain culture, and producing work reflective and literary, but yet in such *rapport* with the people as to utter its thought and sentiment and appeal to its heart—pieces, in short, composed not by the people, but for the people and for all the people—we believe that the convenient term is sufficiently exact, and that it might be preserved."

Child truly says:

"The fundamental characteristic of popular ballads is, therefore, the absence of subjectivity and of self-consciousness. Though they do not write themselves, as William Grimm has said, though a man and not a people has composed them, still the author counts for nothing, and it is not by mere accident, but with the best reasons that they have come down to us anonymous."

Kittredge and Gummere turn their back on the minstrel; the village *improvisatore*, with his crowd, or with his choral dancers, fills their vision, and the ballad arises very much as an epidemic of measles, which cannot be traced to the infecting touch of one individual. We surely hear in them something different from this—the voice of a poet, be he poor or great, yet knowing his art and knowing his story.

The historic ballads are those which have a basis of fact in historic event, in an episode of clash and strife, such as the raid at Otterburn, the burning of the Bonnie House of Airlie, or the liberation of Kinmont Willie. There was doubtless in every raiding band of reivers some strong character whose imagination would be stirred by the quiet ride over the moors in the dark, the moonlight chase, the weird gleam of the water in the moss, the death-grapple, and then the leap towards victory out of difficulties and stress. There were plenty models, doubtless, on which to mould his story of the episode still fresh in his memory, and such an one could very easily become the minstrel of his own exploits, and the recorder of the triumph of his clan.

The genuine antique, and the effect of the modern hand on it, may be seen in more than one notable ballad. "The bard, be sure, was weather-wise, who framed the grand old ballad of *Sir Patrick Spens*," says Coleridge, in his *Sibylline Leaves*. Peter Buchan said he had it from "a wight of Homer's craft," a singing mendicant for fifty years, in the north. Sir Walter prefers to take the groundwork of his version from "Robert Hamilton, Esq., Advocate," Sheriff of Lanarkshire, and one of the principal Clerks of Session. Chambers found rest for his soul in attributing it to Lady Elizabeth Wardlaw, but he was without real proof of anything except perhaps a little recasting. The grave question of the reality of Sir Patrick Spens as an individual entered into the discussion. The historical record mentions Sir David Wemyss and Sir Michael Scott of Balwearie as the commissioners who were sent to Norway to bring the Maid of Norway to her kingdom. But these were not chosen because they were "skeely skippers," nor was their ship necessarily the only one that left the Scottish shores in connection with negotiations every step of which was not noted in public journals. The objection, too, that Spens is not an early Scottish name is not founded on fact, the name being found in "five charters of David II., between 1329 and 1370," [1] even although popular memory has more than once kept green names and incidents which have dropped from public record.

Sir Walter's romantic outlook also feels that the ballad is vulgarized by Buchan's mendicant version, which, instead of "wapping" the leaking vessel around with "silken claith," expresses the truer seamanlike instruction:

> "There are five and fifty feather beds
> Weel packit in ae room,
> And ye'll get as much gude canvas
> As wrap the ship a' roun'."

a more genuine touch, although not with so strong an appeal of splendour as the other.

In regard to the historicity of this ballad, Percy acknowledged that he could find no corroboration of this "fatal expedition." Sir Walter Scott avoided the difficulty by referring it to an otherwise forgotten expedition of Sir Patrick Spens, to convoy the Maid of Norway to Scotland on the

[1] Child, vol. ii., 1886.

death of Alexander III. Fordun records that the embassy which, in 1281, sailed across the seas with Margaret, Alexander's daughter, for her wedding with Eric of Norway, suffered shipwreck on the return journey. According to Wyntoun it was on the 12th August that this embassy hoisted their sails for Norway, and Motherwell's calculation fixed this date as falling on a Monday, as in the ballad. Different versions were uncertain in their use of "to Norroway" and "from Norroway," so that this theory is allowed to hold the field. The northern version puts "Aberdeen" instead of "Aberdour" in its last verse; and in Papa Stronsay, Orkney, a mound was spoken of by the natives as the grave of Sir Patrick Spens, though the patness of the discovery by Maidment was not free from suspicion. It is a remarkable fact that the expedition sent by James VI. in 1589 to bring his bride from Denmark is almost a reflection of the ballad. The delay in the return of the fleet was discovered to be caused by stormy head-winds, which had compelled the king's ships to take refuge in Norway. Quarrels ensued between the Scots and Danes as to whether the queen should not be brought over until the spring-time, or should face the risks of winter sailing. The king decided in the spirit of the ballad, despite the time of year and the storms of the deep. Amongst the commissioners was Sir Patrick Vans of Barnbarroch, who had been one of the original embassy negotiating the marriage in 1587. James, having embarked secretly, took with him this same Sir Patrick Vans, who returned in December with the intimation of the king's safe arrival, and satisfactory conclusion of the matrimonial affair. This name might easily enough have been corrupted in popular recital to the better-known Spens, just as has happened frequently in other ballads, notably in that of the *Capture of Cales*, where *Cadiz* is meant. The weather when the king set forth was extremely wild, and the ships were driven back into the Forth twenty or thirty miles. In Moysie's *Memoirs* the very phrase "deadlie storme" is used. Two wretched witches were burned in 1590 for acknowledging that they had, through their "black art," created this tempest. It would be interesting confirmation of the ballad if it were known whether any loss of craft or life took place in this episode. After all, the poet and the people must be allowed their usual rights!

Auld Maitland, which was rejected by Professor Child, depended on the authority of the Ettrick shepherd, who got it from the recitation of his mother, who on her part received it from "a blind man who died at the advanced age of ninety, and is said to have been possessed of much traditionary knowledge." The anonymity of this "Father William" is characteristic. There need be little or no doubt of the historic fact of the bold defence of that "darksome house," the Castle of Thirlestane, against English raiders, and the objection to the genuineness of the ballad on the ground that Edward I. had no nephew to be slain by the blade of young Maitland, would, if pressed, overthrow Barbour's *Brus* and Blind Harry's *Wallace*. The hatred of "the auld foe" gave the poet his justification. He had his own feelings and those of his audience towards their hereditary enemy to glut and satisfy. If Edward had not a nephew for Maitland's bloody vengeance, then he ought to have had, and one must be invented for the purpose of the bard! From Gawain Douglas's reference in his *Palice of Honour*:

> "There saw I Maitland upon auld beird gray,"

it seems that he was a character familiar from some old romance, as he is there wedged in among Rauf Coilzear, Piers Plowman, Gowmacmorne, and other well-known names. In the Maitland manuscript a poem in praise of Lethington says:

> "Of auld Sir Richard of that name,
> We have heard sing and say,
> Of his triumphant nobill fame,
> And of his auld baird gray,
> And of his nobill sonnis three,
> Quhilk that tyme had no maik;
> Quhilk maid Scotland renounit be,
> And all England to quaik."

Only twice in the long ballad are acknowledged lines inserted "by Mr James Hogg to complete the verse"; but the shepherd's tones are heard very clearly through it all.

The boldness of the raiders had a voice of its own, especially when the rights of their swords were challenged. The

"Outlaw Murray," when asked by the royal messenger for his charter, spoke for all of his kind:

> "'Thir lands are mine!' the outlaw said,
> 'I ken nae king in Christentie;
> Frae Soudron I this Foreste wan,
> When the King nor his knights were not to see. . . .
>
> "'Thir lands of Ettricke Foreste fair
> I wan them from the enemie;
> Like as I wan them, sae will I keep them,
> Contrair a' kingis in Christentie.'"

Yet a compromise was effected, and for the gift of the sheriffdom of Ettrick he gave up the key of his castle to the king, and got his charter.

The boldness that spoke there found voice also through Johnnie Armstrong of Gilnockie, when seized and doomed by King James. After vainly pleading for his liberty he drew himself at last straight up before the king who had dealt meanly by him, and ere he turned to die he uttered his deathless scorn in the grand phrase:

> "I have asked grace at a graceless face."

A whimsical line at the end of the *Ballat of Allane-a-Maut* reads:

> "Finis quod Allane Matsonis suddartis."

This reference to the "soldiers of Allane-a-Maut" has been responsible for putting on the page of Scottish poetic history the names "Allan Matson" or "Allan Watson," just as in the same way the name of "John Blyth" has slipped in as the author of the *Ballat of Gude Fallois*, "John Blyth" being, of course, only "merry John." The *Ballat of Allane-a-Maut* is in the Bannatyne manuscript, and it is entirely worthy of preservation. It is, indeed, a mediæval praise of John Barleycorn. It has been attributed to Dunbar, and it is worthy of his most whimsical mood. There are touches of the true artist in it:

> "Quhen he wes zung, and cled in grene,
> Haifand his air abowt his ene,
> Baith men and wemen did him mene,
> Quhen he grew on zon hillis he;—
> Quhy sowld nocht Allane honorit be? . . .

"The grittest cowart in this land,
Ffra he with Allane entir in band,
Thocht he may nowdir gang nor stand,
Zit fowrty sall nocht gar him fle;—
Quhy sowld nocht Allane honorit be? . . .

"Zit wes thair nevir sa gay a gallane,
Fra he meit with our maistir Schir Allane,
unless Bot gif he hald him by the hallane, partition
Bakwart on the flure fallis he;—
Quhy sowld nocht Allane honorit be? . . .

"My maistir Allane grew so stark,
Quhill he maid mony cunning clerk,
Vpoun thair faiss he settis his mark,
A blud reid noiss besyd thair E;—
Quhy sowld nocht Allane honorit be? . . .

"My maistir Allane I may sair curss,
He levis no mony in my purss,
At his command I mon deburss
Moir nor the twa pairt of my fe;—
Quhy sowld nocht Allane honorit be?"

Another which is of intense interest as being almost the direct ancestor of the immortal *Duncan Gray* is also from the same manuscript. The name "Clerk" has been obliterated from the manuscript. To him also was attributed *Ane Brasch of Wowing*, and he is supposed to have been the "Maister Johne Clerk" who is mentioned in the *Lament for the Deth of the Makkaris*. It is a strongly characteristic poem:

"Robeyns Jok come to wow our Jynny,
On our feist-evin quhen we wer fow;
Scho brankit fast, and maid hir bonny,
And said, 'Jok, come ze for to wow?'
Scho birneist hir baith breist and brow,
And maid hir cleir as ony clok;
Than spak hir deme, and said, 'I trow,
Ze come to wow our Jynny, Jok.'"

The details of the possessions of each of those who are going to start life together are of considerable worth as reflecting the life of the people.

Others, such as *Ane Ballat of Matriemonie*, are of domestic humours.

Only a superficial glance over this array of fatherless children is required to discover that whatever else they are, they are genuine offspring of the race that gave them birth,

that their voice is the voice of the people, and that they represent the life and thought of the period to which they refer. It was a period of the ready sword and the ready tongue, and a somewhat slack morality, yet every sin seems, in ballad literature, to earn its retribution. The change of circumstances is remarkably evinced by the fact that though our poets are writing ballads to-day, these are not becoming the traditional pabulum of our peasantry, probably the distorted version of a music-hall ditty taking the place of the old heroic lay.

The main interest in the ballad minstrelsy largely arises from their absolute anonymity, and the fact that they form romantic bridges over blank spaces of unrecorded history. The wildest transitions take place without awakening wonder. The scene may leap from lonely moorland to the king's court—the peasant carrying himself frankly as the noble in the monarch's presence. It does not awaken wonder in the least degree.

It is stated in Bishop Leslie's *History of Scotland* that our "bordir men" delighted in their own music and in the songs that they themselves make about their deeds. Of the antiquity of this kind of thing there can be no doubt. Piers Plowman names the romances of *Robin Hood* and *Randolph, Earl of Chester* as being well known in his time, in the fourteenth century, by the common people, and Barbour's reference we have already seen.

It is impossible to trace the quarrying and re-quarrying, the moulding and re-moulding of these ballads. No man can ever know how much Blind Harry's *Wallace* owes to stores of ballads recording that hero's exploits; but it is quite evident also, at the same time, that the ballads of Wallace are frequently but pitcherfuls lifted or drawn from Harry's romance.

One cannot help noting with great interest the number of ballads that have between each line a refrain of some popular nature, probably widely known and traditional, and very probably giving the name of the tune associated with the ballad—such refrains as are found in

> "There were twa sisters lived in a bower,
> Binnorie, O Binnorie;
> There came a knight to be their wooer,
> By the bonnie mill-dams o' Binnorie."

Peter Buchan mentions one such refrain which ran :

"Even into Buchanshire, vari, vari, O !"

This ballad of *Binnorie* has the well-known fancy of the "harp made of her breast-bone, strung with her yellow hair," which sings of its own accord songs that startle all listeners. There is scarcely a country with any folk-lore but has a similar *motif*. Another very notable and somewhat similar ballad is the *Bonnie Banks of Fordie*, with the story of the banished man who slays the three girls, whom he afterwards discovers to have been his sisters. One can almost be certain that the listeners beat their hands or feet, and themselves recited the refrain as a chorus :

"There were three ladies lived in a bower,
Eh, wow, bonnie.
And they went out to pull a flower,
On the bonnie banks of Fordie."

The web of the ballad is created thus, as by the movement of a shuttle to and fro, to the time of the refrain.

While national in that they gird at the common foe, the English, they are yet in origin more truly local to the district or clan. *Kinmont Willie*, while it chuckles over the discomfiture of Lord Scroop, rejoices in the victory of the bold Buccleuch. *Otterburn* is rather the chant of the chivalry of the Douglas than the ballad of the bravery of Scotland. In the ballads of *Sir Andrew Barton*, *Sir Patrick Spens*, and a few like these, you find something more of a national expression. This, of course, is quite natural, for it was the period of local, parochial, and tribal warfare.

The advent of Percy's *Reliques* in 1765 brought into the field of literature a very miscellaneous host of verses, including several of the most beautiful ballads. The basis of this collection was the Percy *Folio* of date about 1650. It has been stated that only eleven ballads "are extant in manuscript older than the seventeenth century." This Percy manuscript is, of all ballad sources, the chief in interest.

The general *motif* of ballad lore is tragedy, and the tragedy arises very frequently from a liaison of true lovers, the abduction of a bride, or the jealousy of the knightly brothers, as in the ballad of *Yarrow* and *Clerk Saunders*, while through almost all of them runs the golden thread of the devoted constancy of womanhood. There is amongst

them all a vein, unexpressed, yet powerfully awakened in the heart, of magical suggestion of sympathy with the sad ones, fate-overwhelmed, as eternal as the cry:

"O the pity of it, Iago!"

The ballads of dragons and "laithly worms," along with those of transformation, as in *Tamlane* and the truly great bit of verse, *The Wife of Usher's Well*, so strange, leaning over the dark borders of mystery into the veiled world of the hereafter, move grimly about the verge of the supernatural.

The sources of ballads are various, then—the common stock of human superstitions, of human life, and of human sorrow, with fragments that have fallen from the popular romances; the direct fact of history and later imitations of the archaic remnant. Their charm and appeal are straight from the experiences which gave them spontaneous voice. They strike right out from the shoulder, and, without any conscious art, touch frequently the wonder of the Universal, just as if a hand by accident had pulled a chord hanging down through the dark.

Later generations have tried to copy the methods and colour of those ancient world-pictures; but the windows of to-day are different from those through which the early glamour-lovers saw the world, and the vistas of the modern singer have not the dream-colour of the early bard.

The ballads must ever remain most precious reminiscences of the far-off times when romance was a bit of the reality of life; when love fell over death in the darkness, and sorrow, blind-folded, stood often of a sudden face to face with fate.

They seize us with their directness. We are their bond-slaves ere we know. We march with the thousands that are marching to meet in the doomful clash of "the red Harlaw." We hear the "land of Garioch"

"Crying the coronach on hie,
Alas, alas, for the Harlaw!"

We look in upon the feud of Yarrow, and see the brave life betrayed to death beside the "wan water" in the Border hills. And we join in the reverberating shout which bore to the waking burghers of Carlisle the sarcastic greetings of Kinmont Willie.

The words of Sir Philip Sidney in his *Apologie for Poetrie* are universal in the application of their truth:

"I never heard the old song of Percie and Douglas, that I found not my heart moved more than with a trumpet; and yet it is sung but by some blinde crowder, with no rougher voice than rude style; which beeing so evill apparelled in the dust and cob-web of that uncivill age, what would it work, trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindare!"

Even in our practical and matter-of-fact to-day the touch of chivalry gives our hearts hush. Romance looks us deep in the eyes, and we have understanding and vision bestowed upon us. The spirit of ancient days speaks to us through those old verses as forcefully as when the minstrel shook them forth in market-place or castle hall.

In these ballads of our land the dead world of our ancestors becomes a living reality once more for us to-day; such faithful reflections are they of the years of ancient times. Under their spell the present-day world is forgotten quite, the narrow walls of time expand, and we hear the ripple of ancient streams singing old songs to the sea. There's a rustle of leaves in the forest. There's an echoing tramp on the shore, and under the struggling moonbeams there's a glint of spears in the greenwood as the troopers ride into England to drive a prey, or to harry a neighbour's kye. The air gets full of cries and sorrows:

"Of old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago."

We hear the wail over many a brave life whose heart-blood stained the heather bell. The curtain lifts, and we see

"Three nobles drinking wine,
And ere they paid the lawing
They set a combat them between,
To fight it ere the dawing."

so light a thing was life, langsyne, upon the braes of Yarrow.

Or Sir Patrick Spens, calm in the raging storm till the crash overwhelms them all, and he and his Scottish lords go down in the lone North Sea to sleep till Judgment morn.

Or again, when Edom o' Gordon, with his cruel heart, is burning the House of Rhodes, while its lord is far away, and the fair lady and her sweet children are dying by inches in

the dreadful smoke. Her boy's failing voice pleads for surrender, "for the reek it smothers me."

"I wad gi'e a' my gowd, my bairn,
Sae wad I a' my fee,
For ae blast o' the western wind
To blaw the reek frae thee.

"O then upspak' her daughter dear,
She was baith jimp and sma';
O row me in a pair o' sheets,
And tow me ower the wa'.

"They rowed her in a pair o' sheets,
And towed her ower the wa',
But on the point o' Gordon's spear
She gat a deidly fa'.

"O bonnie, bonnie was her mou',
And cherry were her cheeks,
And clear, clear was her yellow hair,
Whereon the red bluid dreeps.

"Then wi' his spear he turned her ower,
And O her face was wan.
Said he, 'Ye are the first that e'er
I wished alive again.'"

One can hear the sob yet rising in the throat of the bard as he rehearsed these wonderful lines in the hall.

Could anything be grimmer or more gruesome in effect than *The Twa Corbies?*

"As I was walking all alane,
I heard twa corbies making a mane;
The tane unto the t'other say,
'Where sall we gang and dine to-day?'—

"'In behint yon auld fail dyke,
I wot there lies a new-slain knight;
And naebody kens that he lies there,
But his hawk, his hound, and lady fair.

"'His hound is to the hunting gane,
His hawk, to fetch the wild-fowl hame,
His lady's ta'en another mate,
Sa we may tak our dinner sweet.

"'Ye'll sit on his white hause-bane,
And I'll pick out his bonnie blue e'en
Wi' ae lock o' his gowden hair,
We'll theek our nest when it grows bare.

"'Mony a one for him makes mane,
But nane sall ken where he is gane:
O'er his white banes, when they are bare
The wind sall blaw for evermair.'"

The absolutely terrible of the contact of the spirit-world of dread can never be better expressed than in the verse:

"Ride on, ride on, proud Margaret,
Till the water comes o'er your bree;
For the bride maun ride deep and deeper
Wha rides this ford wi' me."

Directness of portraiture brings the scene before the listener in half a dozen strokes, as in the romantic landscape of the verse:

"O row the boat, my mariners,
And bring me to the land;
For yonder I see my love's castle
Close by the salt sea strand."

So also in the music which seems to ring across the dark moorland, where the faithful woman's heart is waiting for the lover whom she is to win back from fairyland. You can feel it through your own heart as you read:

"About the dead hour of the night,
She heard the bridles ring."

There they came riding past her in the wonder of fairyland:

"Will of the Wisp before them went,
Sent forth a twinkling light."

In a moment she has her lover, whom she has missed so long, in her arms within the circle of the holy water. He takes every odious form that fairy spells can lay upon him, but she holds him fast with the grip of love till he changes to his own:

"They shaped him in her arms at last
A mother-naked man;
She cuist her mantle over him,
And sae her true love wan."

The relationships between hearts are stated in the plainest matter-of-fact manner. The lovers who are parting say to one another:

"When your ring turns pale and wan
Then I'm in love wi' another man."

Mere matters of etiquette and politeness do not make a lord hesitate to cry out:

"Ye lee, ye lee, ye leears loud
Sae loud's I hear ye lee."

They tell of a world surrounded with the environment of the unknown. It is as if, in the dark, a hand laid on a moorland stone felt it change into an elfin knight, dreeing his weird in the wilderness. The seashores become haunts of mermaids. The quiet wells in the woodlands reflect strange faces, and over the plains go the cavalcades of ghosts dimly riding.

It is not safe to dwell in a world like that, the spells and charms of elfinland are so swift and sure:

"There cam' a wind oot o' the North,
A sharp wind and a snell;
A deep sleep cam' over me,
And frae my horse I fell."

Windows open suddenly into palaces, and you see:

"The king sits in Dunfermline town
Drinking the bluid-reed wine."

You hear the running of sad waters through the moss, the wailing of lonely women, love-reft, in solitary towers. There never was such a beautiful brood of fatherless bairns as these ballads, whose authors are forgotten, if they were ever known.

Of the other side, the reiving open-mouthed laughter of brave fighting men, you find the best reflection in *Kinmont Willie*, though it owes so much to Scott's magical touch. Kinmont Willie, "the bolder of Bordest reives," riding quietly along just after a truce had been concluded on the borders, is a moving annoyance to the English borderers, who cannot bear to think that the scourge of Cumberland should be allowed to ride past so quietly. They were certain that the queen would pardon, and the Lord Scroop would chuckle if, in spite of truce and peace upon the borders, he were lodged in Carlisle. The proposal was at once agreed to; without a word of warning they went over the water and made a dash on Kinmont Will. He heard the beat of horses' hoofs behind him; he knew the mettle of his brown blood mare. So he puts his spurs to her side, and like an arrow from the bow she flew beneath him till the pursuers were left far behind.

But Will's nag slips a shoe, and falls dead lame, and so the bold reiver is laid by the heels and brought before Lord Scroop in Carlisle Castle. There Will does not hesitate to assert the violence done to truce and treaty by such conduct:

"Now haud thy tongue, thou rank reiver!
There's never a Scot shall set thee free;
Before ye cross my castle yate,
I trow ye shall take farewell of me."

But word of the injury done to his vassal is brought to the bold Buccleuch as he feasts in Branxholme Hall, and while Carlisle town is laid asleep his slogan startles its slumbers, and his men are at the gate with ladders and with hammers to set the Kinmont free:

"'Now sound out, trumpets!' quo' Buccleuch:
'Let's waken Lord Scroope right merrilie!'
Then loud the warden's trumpet blew—
O wha dare meddle wi' me? . . .

"'Farewell, farewell, my gude Lord Scroope!
My gude Lord Scroope, farewell!' he cried;
'I'll pay you for my lodging maill,
When first we meet on the Border side.'"

Those were wild times, when blood was thicker than water, and much kindliness was within the limit of kinship and clan, but for all beyond the mystic pale it was spear-point and buckler-edge—when it needed a stout warder at the gate, and a tough eighteen-foot-long spear, and a good steel bonnet on your head, to insure your life; and your sleep was not secure from noisy interruption, and you had to count your cattle every morning. Regarding these compositions it can be said truly, in the words of Leyden, in another connection, that

"they never divest themselves of the manners and habits of thinking familiar to the age in which they lived. It is this circumstance which stamps a real value on the rudest composition of an earlier period, a value which continually increases with their antiquity."

In connection with popular songs and ballads, it is remarkable, of course, how little of contemporary music is preserved in Scottish manuscripts, and yet Scotland was not unmusical, considerable attention being paid to the training of the people down to the sixteenth century, when the Reformation set its face against what it deemed ribaldry and sin.

References in *Colkelbie's Sow*, the *Complaynt of Scotland*, and the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis*, prove the existence of a vast store of song literature.

Considerable ingenuity has been expended in claiming a great many of our popular melodies for England. One of the most notable examples is the old song *The Huntis Up*, mentioned in the *Complaynt of Scotland*. Chappell, in his *Popular Music of the Olden Time*, claims it as being composed by Gray in the time of Henry VIII., while Furnivall asserts that the first mention of the tune is in 1537; whereas Henryson in his fable of *The Wolf, the Foxe, and the Cadzear*, written before 1480, has a line:

"The Cadzear sang '*Huntis up on hie.*'"

It was thus a folk-song north of the Tweed long before the dates asserted by Chappell and Furnival. It was further, as may be seen from the ballad of *Habbie Simson*, a stock-piece in the repertory of Scottish pipers.

The same method is applied to *Broom, Broom on Hill*, which is mentioned in the *Complaynt of Scotland*.

Under the influence of the Anglo-Scottish kings, a fashion for corrupted and mock Scottish ballads ran through the London concert-rooms and theatres. Chappell's ignorance of the place-names mentioned in Scottish folk-tunes invalidates his assertions. From the *Second Tale of a Tub*, it is evident that the "blue-bonnets," or Scots, were in the habit of singing in taverns Scottish songs and melodies, and these became in this way popular and familiar, passing into broadsheets and chap-books, undergoing in the process considerable corruption through the ignorance of Scottish words on the part of those who printed or carried them over. It is quite clear that English versions, which show entire ignorance of the words that are in them, and grotesque corruptions of Scottish phrases, could never have been the original of the Scottish song. For example, the man who printed or wrote "a win sheep," instead of "a wheen sheep," or who tells "jo Janet" to "kit into the draw-well," instead of "to keek into the draw-well," was obviously borrowing, and not creating—lifting that of which he knew neither the shape nor meaning. It seems clearly demonstrable that considerable interactionary traffic in such matters took place between Scotland and England in the Stewart period, as was, indeed,

most natural; and though Ramsay and others in their compilations shifted from across the Border whatever suited them, they very frequently in doing so only brought home again some Scottish "little Bo-peep" of melody with her flock—sometimes without "their tails behind them."

One has only to look at the list of songs mentioned in the *Complaynt of Scotland*[1] to see how many have disappeared for ever, although they may justly be acknowledged to have been well-springs, which, having fed later streams, have dried up, and thus disappeared. Burns acknowledged his inspiration received from them, and the tinkle of obscure and forgotten rivulets sounds in the music of Scottish poetry up to our own day.

[1] *See* Appendix I. p. 496.

CHAPTER XIII

THE REFORMATION AND POETRY

Sir Richard Maitland occupies a place of his own as being essentially the last of the "makkaris." For a great change was passing over the outlook and language of Scottish writers. The Doric vernacular as a vehicle of potent expression was slipping from its hold upon native writers, and it was not to renew its tenure until the day of Burns. Even then, though Ramsay and Fergusson were prophets in the wilderness preparing for a vocal advent of the Scottish spirit returning to the fields once familiar to it, it was with an utterance and feeling of a later day, with new phrase and new touch, if with old melodies and the form and garb of bygone times. This was inevitable in the drift of historic development. Time, sowing with both hands in the fields of progress, ensured a harvest of thought and music marked with the colour and growth of later days.

The disaster of Flodden Field in September 1513 was the water-shed of Scotland's history and literature. The blow which England struck there wounded to the heart mediævalism in Church and State. Scotland tasted the experience of having a babe as king. The opportunity lay open for the rapacity of the nobles and churchmen to exercise without restraint its will upon the people.

The influence of the Renaissance was felt in the advent of an irresistible religious enthusiasm. Lyndsay, Buchanan, and Knox were the triple-tongued voice of the new movement. Their names are written over the lintel under which Scotland passed into the road which led to the broad highway of the world. There are those who think that Scotland during the Reformation period suffered certain blighting losses. But it is easier, in our day of freedom, to sigh for the romance of mediæval feudalism and chivalry, than it would have been

to bear the oppression of political greed and ecclesiastical persecution in the days when these were masters of Scotland.

Of those struggles in Scotland which found tangible utterance in the battles of conscience in the Reformation, little survives as literature, except Knox's own *History*, which is not so much prose as a saga of the strife. A strong Berserker spirit breathes through it. It is as though we look upon a war-galley, and Knox in it with his weapon red, often with the life's blood of his enemy. Sometimes it does not show him in a gentle light. Often a fierce glow pervades the narrative. Not seldom a cruel strain of triumph echoes from line to line. But he was imbued with invincibleness. Nothing could turn him back. As with another, "Here stand I. God help me, I cannot do otherwise," might be taken as the legend of his shield; and many a rude dint it enabled him to bear without shrinking.

Knox has been condemned and criticised for his truculent virulence, but he had known, in the very deepest degree, what he was fighting. He remembered, still, the irk of the galley-bondage on the seas, and if he escaped the stake he had felt the smell of burning near enough to have indelibly written on his remembrance what his country was facing. What Morton said of him by his grave he himself proved in his life—he neither flattered nor feared the face of any man. His ecclesiastical and educational schemes were modern in spirit, and far in advance of his times. His own words might be written beneath his name in history:

"None I haif corrupted, none I haif defrauded, merchandise haif I not maid."

In this he differed *toto mundo* from so many around him, whose descendants to-day forget the tenure on which their fathers held their broad acres.

Buchanan does not quite stand alongside of him, for he wrote his gibes in Latin, but Lyndsay is not far off; only Knox wrote with a clean pen, whereas Lyndsay dipped his quill in the dish of the common people, as he wrote for them, and it was frequently dirt that was in it. Yet, however it may strike us to-day, it was considered clean enough material for what he was pelting. The wonder to us now is that he was considered a gentleman, and fit for polite society, even in his time.

It was natural that this new period should be one of reaction. The Reformers were so much afraid of leakage in the spiritual dykes which they were building that they set their countenances against mirth and balladry. There is little wonder in this, when one remembers the madness and folly of the court of James, as reflected in the pages of Dunbar and other contemporary writers. Certainly, judging from the utterances of some leading poets, the Reformed Church had great reason to be careful if she was to make certain that the heart and life of the Scottish people were to be kept clean. Sometimes one might be compelled to shut out an angel or two because of the rabble at his heels; it is so difficult to discriminate in a crisis. Doubtless, also, the more serious in the country were almost justified in concluding that the disaster of Flodden was a judgment on carelessness and bawdry. This attitude was manifested in the Highlands as well as in the Lowlands. The Celt had his ancient stories of mystic heroes and semi-divinities. Bishop Carswell, who belonged to an Argyleshire family of Lowland extraction, was chaplain to the Earl of Argyle, the first of his quality who embraced the Protestant religion. The Reformation ministers had few Gaelic speakers amongst them, and Carswell therefore was a man of great importance to their cause. At first Superintendent of the Isles and Argyle, he was in 1564 appointed titular bishop, being formally presented by Queen Mary to that office, and to the abbacy of Iona in 1556, an appointment through which the Abbey finally was enabled to pass into the possession of the Argyle family. Carswell set himself sternly against the bards and seannachies, who had their revenge upon him by handing down, even until to-day, their satires on his memory. To him, as he expressed it in the epistle dedicatory to the Gaelic translation of Knox's *Prayer Book*, these tales seemed "vain, tempting, lying, worldly histories concerning the *Tuath de dannan*, and concerning warriors and champions and *Fingal*, the son of *Cumhal*, with his heroes." This in 1576, in the Highlands, was parallel with the title-page of the *Gude and Godly Ballates* of 1578, which flung down the challenge "to prophaine sangis, for avoyding of sinne and harlotrie."

But an equally important fact—at least in regard to Scottish literature—emerged from the Reformation. The movement had in the foreground of it the demand for Holy

Scripture in the vernacular. Now the only Testaments that could be had were of English origin. The Catholic party were driven, in the conflict, to closer alliance with France, a fact which turned the Reformers all the more to England. It is well known that John Knox was considered to speak an anglified dialect. Ninian Wynzet flings this in his teeth, insinuating that he is thus a traitor and un-Scottish. He further, in a letter to Knox, alleges that the Reformer had forgotten "our auld plaine Scottis, quhilk your mother lerit zou." Again he says: "In tymes cuming I sall write to you my mind in Latin, for I am not acquynted with your southeron." Another Catholic writer says in this respect regarding the Reformers:

> "Giff King James the fyft var alyve, quha hering ane of his subjectis knap suddrone, declarit him ane trateur: quhidder vald he declaire you triple traitoris, quha not onlie knappis suddrone in your negative confession, bot also hes causit it to be emprentit in London in contempt of our native language?"

The change which the Scottish language was undergoing in this way is perfectly evident from the words and construction of Lyndsay himself. The climax arrived when, by the union of the Crowns, the Court was removed south of the Border, and it became the fashion not only to assimilate the form of the language of England, but to smother the Scottish accent itself under a veneer somewhat similar to what in many cases we have observed in our own day in Scotland.

The poets of the sixteenth century, therefore, were singing on the shadow side of the hill of change, at the foot of which lay the graves of the last of the "makkaris." Drummond of Hawthornden, Alexander, Earl of Stirling, and their school wrote not in Scots, but in the English of the court of James, and though, having passed through the trough of the wave, the Scottish vernacular lived once again in the sunlight of the utterance of Ramsay, Fergusson, and Burns, these poets had a hand in the treasure-house of the literature of England as well as of their native land.

In Knox's *History of the Reformation* we find references to metrical versions of the Psalms. On the evening of his arrest, we are told, Wishart the Martyr sang some lines of the fifty-first Psalm in Scottish metre. The words which Knox quotes in telling of this are found in agreement with the

paraphrase of that Psalm in the work known as *The Gude and Godlie Ballatis*, attributed to the Wedderburns of Dundee.

Clement Marot had proved among the Huguenots of France the power of such renderings in the vernacular. Several adaptations of the French Psalms and melodies were made in Germany, the most popular of these being Lobwasser's, and they were utilised for similar purposes in Danish, Italian, and Dutch. The influence of these, on the return of the exiles in the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, made itself felt through the permission of the queen, given in June 1559, that

"for the comforting of such as delight in music it may be permitted that in the beginning and end of Common Prayer either at morning or evening, there may be sung an hymn or such like song to the praise of Almighty God, in the best melody and music that may be devised, having respect that the sentences of the hymn may be understood and perceived,"

that those who could not read, and so were unable to join in the singing, might understand what was sung. The practice of congregational singing, thus introduced, became almost universal. Bishop Jewel wrote:

"You may now sometimes see at St Paul's Cross, after the sermon, six thousand persons, old and young, of both sexes, singing and praising God."

The movement came to Scotland direct from Germany. It is impossible to over-estimate the debt that the Reformation owed to the hymns of Luther, Eber, Sachs, and Weisse. But even Roman Catholicism, both in Britain and in Germany, had been in the same field, as is proved by the music-book in the British Museum, of date 1530, in which the old ballad *My Love morneth for Me* was turned to spiritual account:

"Who is my love but God above
That born was of Mary,
And on the rode hys precyous blode — cross
He shed to make me fre,
Whom shold I prove so true of love,
So gentyl and curtes as he,
That king of blys my love he ys,
That morneth so sor for mee. . . .

Now Cryst Jesu my love most treu
Have mercy upon me,
I axe the grace for my trespas
That I have done to the,
For thy sweet name save me from shame
And all adversytye,
For Mary's sake to the me take,
And mourne no more for me."

The Reformed Church in England was slow and backward in this matter, the best she could give being the Sternhold and Hopkins versions of the Psalms.

Miles Coverdale, the English Reformer, who had married a Scotswoman, had while living in exile in Wittemberg become acquainted with a book of *Psalms and Spiritual Songs*, which was in circulation in Germany among the English exiles ; and when he returned to England he published a similar work for his countrymen. We have really nothing to do here with Coverdale's Book of Psalms and Songs, yet that book, along with that of the Wedderburns, is a literary problem, for there is no doubt whatever that the one borrowed from the other, without acknowledgment, four hymns, which are almost exactly alike. As Coverdale, however, gives no hint in his work that he had translated from the German, it seems to be more likely that he had incorporated Wedderburn's hymns.

At the same time as Coverdale was in Wittemberg, there were in that city three sons of a Dundee merchant, *alumni* of St Andrews University, who had all been compelled to flee into exile. They were evidently of a family of some standing, as John Wedderburn is entered in the University Register as *divus*.

Row, in his *Church History*, refers to a metrical address to the friars, which was of great effect in directing and concentrating attacks on the ancient church. Such books, apparently exposing the vices of the clergy, were printed in England, and smuggled into Scotland, becoming very effective amongst the common people, as we can gather from Archibald Hamilton :

"Immissis in Scotiam libris atque in vulgus disseminatis, qui, sub purioris cujusdam Evangelii specioso pretextu Ecclesiasticorum virorum vitam et mores odiose traducerent."[1]

[1] *Confusionis Calvinianæ Demonstratio.*

The danger of writing verses in a cause like this, and at the same time the effectiveness of such an exercise, may be seen from the tragedy of 1539, recorded by Calderwood, of "one Kennedy, who had not passed the eighteenth year of his age, a man of good wit and excelling in Scottish poesy," who was burned at the stake by the Archbishop of Glasgow. John Stewart, son of Lord Methven, is also recorded as author of "manie ballats against the corruptiouns of the time," along with William Hay, Earl of Errol and Great Constable of Scotland, whose will and testament in Scottish metre was drawn up at St Andrews at the same period by Robert Alexander, Advocate. The same writer tells us how the Earl of Glencairn "painted forth the hypocrisy of the friars in rhyme" from an epistle directed "from the holy hermite of Larite to his brethren the Greyfriars."

"About the same time Frier Keilore set forth the history of Christ's passion in form of a comedy, which was acted at Stirling in the King's presence . . . in which all things were so lively expressed that the very simple people understood and confessed that as the priests . . . persuaded the people to refuse Jesus Christ and caused Pilate condemn him, so did the bishops and men called religious blind the people, and persuade princes and judges to persecute such as professed Christ Jesus his blessed Gospel. This plain speaking so inflamed them, that after that they thirsted ever for his blood."

In February 1538 he suffered death.

James Wedderburn, the eldest of the brothers, is recorded to have written and produced certain tragedies and comedies in the vernacular, exposing the clergy; one of these, a mystery, dealt with the execution of the Baptist, while another was a comedy based on the story of Dionysius the Tyrant. The former was acted at the West Port of Dundee; the latter in the playfield of that town. Having in another "counterfeited the conjuring of a ghaist," he had to flee to France in 1540, and lived in either Rouen or Dieppe till he died a prosperous merchant. His play, along with that of Kyllour, has unfortunately been lost.

Robert, the youngest, entered holy orders and became Vicar of Dundee, but had to take to flight during the *régime* of Cardinal Beaton. John, the third, was in St Andrews during the very time when Patrick Hamilton the martyr was teaching there, and may have seen with sore heart

the terrible end of that saintly scholar. On his return to Dundee he also took orders, and acted for a time as a priest; but very soon, suspected of heresy, he was cited, and he either fled before trial or escaped from durance, probably the latter, to judge from entries in the books of the King's Treasurer. From an entry in March 1538-39, it would seem that his main offence had been the possession of books forbidden by statute. Thus it happened that he was in Wittemberg at the same time as Coverdale, MacAlpine, brother-in-law of Coverdale, with Alesius or Alan and others.

It is known that between 1539 and 1546 John Wedderburn was translating from the German. It was probably about the latter date that the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* appeared. They probably appeared first of all in broad-sheets, and their great power was that they knocked on the heart of the people to the familiar tune of popular and well-known ballads. They thus, almost before they knew, sang themselves and their doctrine throughout the nation. Rhyme, besides, offered a facile memorizing medium, while the old melodies, endeared to the people, hummed in their heart and brain as they followed their daily pursuits. The metrical rendering of certain Psalms is said to be "translated out of *Enchiridion Psalmorum*," a title applied to several German books in vogue at this time.

When John Wedderburn came back to Scotland, after the death of James V. in 1542, during the disgrace of the Cardinal, he issued a book of songs and ballads, which he called *Godlie Psalmis and Spirituall Songis*, but they are better known by what the people styled them—*The Psalms of Wedderburn*, or *The Psalms of Dundee*, or, best of all, *The Gude and Godlie Ballatis*. This Wedderburn was finally compelled by Cardinal Beaton to flee to England, where he died in 1556. The book contains paraphrases of nineteen Psalms, with versions of the Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and other portions of Scripture in rhyme, besides certain renderings of German hymns. Its main interest, however, arises from the miscellaneous ballads on religious subjects, written in imitation of popular well-known songs, sometimes gross enough, but all red-hot with scathing sarcasm against the Romish Church. They combined the spirit of the vindictive Psalms with the popular folk-pasquinade. The earliest edition of which a copy is extant

was printed about 1567. It was not, however, the first The title runs:

"Ane compendious Booke of Godly and Spirituall Songs, collectit out of sundrie partes of the Scripture, with sundrie of other Ballates changed out of prophaine Sangis, for avoyding of sinne and harlotrie, etc."

Robert Wedderburn, who was Vicar of Dundee, and returned to Scotland after Beaton's death, had also put his hand to the work, having in Paris consorted with those of the Reformed Church there.

There is a bold and strong straightforwardness in the versions, as, for example, in the ninety-first Psalm:

"Quha on the Hiest will depend
And in His secret help sall traist,
Almighty God sall him defend,
And guide him with His haly gaist.

"Therefore with mind ripe and digest
Thow say to God, my true releve;
My hope, my God of mightis maist,
Only in Him I will beleve."

A dialogue between the flesh and the spirit; *The Forlorne Sone*, being the parable of the prodigal; *Ane Sang of the Birth of Christ*, with the tune of "Baw lulalaw"; and a budget of quaint religious verse disguised in homespun, make up the weird wallet.

Bishop Percy, in his *Reliques of Ballad Poetry*, speaks of the habit, during the Reformation times in Scotland, of setting scurrilous and obscene songs for the rabble to sing to the tunes of the favourite hymns of the Latin service. In Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor* we read, as it were, a reference to this custom:

"But they do no more adhere and keep place together than the Hundredth Psalm to the tune of *Green Sleeves*."

This tune was registered with the Stationers' Company in 1580 as a "new northerne dittye," and it—with *Maggie Lauder* and *John Anderson, my Jo*—were amongst those metamorphosed and secularised hymn-tunes. Again, in the *Winter's Tale*, a clown speaking of the shearers says there is

"but one Puritan amongst them, and he sings Psalms to hornpipes."

This seems to point to the habit of setting sacred songs to popular tunes in order to float reformed doctrine through the people. It does not refer to any habit on the part of the Puritans of ridiculing their opponents by blasphemously wedding the obscene to the pious.

The authors of the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* did not differ from their kind in many respects, for some of the pious verses grossly offend in matters of taste and expression. It is difficult to reconcile some aspects of them in this respect with the ostensible purpose set forth in their title-page, namely, the suppressing of "synne and harlotrie." It unfortunately seems to have been too common to attack any impurity with grossness, and, of course, a counter-mine has to be sunk through the same mire as the mine which it is to master, so that the same mire gets on friend and foe. The battle is fought most frequently without reference to laws of etiquette, the combatants seizing whatever weapons lie to their hand. It has been asserted in defence of the *Ballatis* that they are not so bad as Lyndsay's works, but this is simply a statement to the effect that coarseness is not so bad as absolute uncleanness, and it does not amount to either a justification or assertion of purity. In the setting of piety in which it appears it frequently amounts to blasphemy, and yet it effectively did the work it had set before it.

Of course, one must remember, in justice to the authors of these parodies, the kind of thing which they adapted. However gross Wedderburn's *Ballatis* may have been, those which they superseded were entirely unclean. For us the main thing is that this work of the *Ballatis* was distinctly Scottish in spirit, and the pen of the exile is frequently dipped in the memory of his native land, as thus:

> "And as water that fast rinnes ouer a lin,
> Dois not returne again to the awin place,
> Sa thow, gude Lord, put our sin from thy face."

Lyndsay's work, as compared with Wedderburn's, was that of solid masterful crushing method. The work of the *Ballatis* was to drive the attack home to the quick. They were a guerilla body leaping through the breaches that had been made in the wall of the ancient church, and kept at activity heat the enthusiasm of popular fervour.

The influence of Luther's versions is perfectly plain in

Wedderburn's renderings. In fact, his Christmas hymn, composed for his little boy Hans, is actually translated. It is Luther speaking in the Scottish tongue, sometimes with exquisite appeal, as thus:

"O my deir hert, young Jesu sweit,
Prepare thy creddill in my spreit,
And I sall rocke thee in my hert,
And never mair from thee depart."

Wedderburn probably spoke from experience when, in a very characteristic ballad, he says:

"Say weill many things in hand does take
Do weill ane end of them does make:
When say weill with mony is quite downcast
Do weill is trusty and will stand fast."

The material spiritualizing of some of them is extremely quaint, as in the verse:

"Johne cum kis me now,
Johne cum kis me now,
Johne cum kis me by and by,
And mak no moir adow.
The Lord thy God I am,
That Johne dois the call."

One can catch the drone of the ancient tunes through such verse as:

"Quho is at my windo, quho, quho?
Go from my windo, go, go.
Quha callis thair sa lyke ane stranger?
Go from my windo, go.

"Lord I am heir ane wratcheid mortall
That for thy mercy dois cry and call
Unto the my Lord Celestiall,
Se quho is at my windo, quho."

Some of the old songs must have been winsomely charming in their music. One can see glimpses of this through rents in the holy garment that has been thrust hastily upon them by Wedderburn:

"Downe be yon Riuer I ran,
Downe be yon Riuer I ran,
Thinkand on Christ sa fre,
That brocht me to libertie
And I ane sinful man."

This also speaks somehow with the old power of tears:

"All my lufe, leif me not,
Leif me not, leif me not,
All my lufe, leif me not,
This myne allone;

It is evident that the literature of this period was a bit of the national life, and those who constructed it were absolute artists in their knowledge of the way to the nation's heart. Undoubtedly, along with Knox's *History*, the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* is the most striking monument of this time in the language of the people.

The *Ballatis* had a more intense spiritual indignation. They are more ostensibly religious in their purpose, doctrinal in their teaching, and written not so much as Lyndsay's *Satyr* from the point of view of the social condition of the people. There is a quaint mysticism in the directness of their appeal to Christ as being closely present with the soul.

Apart from these *Ballatis* the Reformation did not provoke in verse such an utterance of character and power as Knox's *History* in prose. Such verses as issued in these broadsheets from the press of Lekprevik were the expression of gross and scurrilous personalities. Sir John Maitland, Robert Sempill, John Davidson, and Sir William Kirkaldy of Grange were supposed to have written the most of them. Writings of this kind do not rise sufficiently near the level of poetry for detailed consideration, although the popularity of such compositions created an atmosphere of criticism, faith, and laughter, peculiarly Scottish, in which it was difficult for anything so treated to continue to live in the respect of the people.

CHAPTER XIV

RELIGION AND LIFE IN THE HIGHLANDS

It could scarcely be expected that the life of the remote places should keep pace with the big movements of the outside world. It is only in times of great stress and storm that the backwater feels the impulse of the ocean far away. For the most part its waters drowse the long year through. So the life of the clachan, secluded and remote from the influence of passing change, remained unmoved, untouched by episodes and spasms of history, which involved for many issues of life and death.

The clan system meant for the clachan dwellers a narrower limitation than even mere parochialism. The warrior, inured to hardship from his boyhood, his courage ripened by experience and guaranteed by the scars of many fights, could venture out through the passes and across the environing hills; but to the clansfolk generally, and especially to the weak and the women, there was a danger-limit, to cross which meant unspeakable risk of running up against the edge of ancient feud. The stream that trickled with soft murmur down from the corrie where the grey mists came creeping morn and even, had known the salt tang of life's blood of brave men in days of battle. There were stories told by the peat fire in the cot, which served to keep memory from sleeping, and at the same time lived as a warning of the shadow which lay waiting, behind the sunshine of the glens.

There were other shadows besides the shadow of ancient feud—the shadows of innumerable fears which moved through the daylight and the dark. In the deep pools beside the stepping-stones, or in the ford, lay the formless, unseen foe upon which no soul had looked, save the soul that was in its last agony, clutched and dragged away to death in the mirk hour of lonely night and dread. Up in the mist-veiled

hollows and ravines the pale ghosts moved and mourned; the echoes of their complaining filled the night with sound. Along the lonely tracks, worn by the girls with the cattle, those homeless spirits moved, step for step with you, and would not leave your side. And while you lay in the quiet clachan, sleep far from your bed of heath and bracken, the peat blinking on the hearth, you knew that up the glen, under the flashing stars, the phosphorescent hosts of fairy-land were guiding the magic mazes of their elvish dances. There were some linking madly in the reel, whose faces would be familiar to any who dared to look upon the revel, secure, perhaps, through the mystic spell of a nail of iron, the sign of the Cross, or some traditional formula before whose pattering verse demons and agencies of evil cowered in fear. Michael Archangel, who in yon great day of wonder put Satan under his feet—he would protect you, if you knew his runes. But it were safer in your plaid, under the thatch, lest like the unforgotten, unreturning ones, your curious inquisitiveness led you into perils inextricable.

The poets and the girls in the clachan fell asleep to dream of the jingling bridle-chains, the courtly pomp, the laughter and the joy of faerie. But the old folks lay brooding of the shadowland through whose low door their shades so soon should pass.

The religion of the clachan meant, thus, a remarkable legacy of residuary superstitious fears and rites, arrested, as if at the church door, in their pilgrimage out of the ages of paganism, and frequently baptized with Christian names, colouring the garment of faith with hues of magic evanescence.

In olden days, so long ago that none could remember in what year it happened, men out of the Islands of the West had moved everywhere, north and eastward, climbing the mountain walls, leaving, sometimes, their bones in places that grew holy in the hearts of the people, telling of the White Christ who hated feud and rapine, and to whose body, bruised from Calvary, the hate of men in angry conflicts added bleeding wounds. They had healed and helped the stricken and the poor, and great chiefs and fierce leaders of tribes that grappled for power against each other had bowed down before them, overcome by the majesty of the Cross. But those days were long since faded into the past, and by the sixteenth century, out in the world beyond the narrow

limit of the glens, the shaven monks had grown careless and forgetful of the heritage which the noble ones, now asleep, had purchased in the land for Christ. The temptation of possessions, the lure of money and ease, had weakened the foundations of the Cross. Yet in the clachans and quiet places behind the blue line of the hills lovingly still dwelt holy men, who gave their lives in true fidelity to Christ, serving the sorrows and necessities of the lowly, rather than hanging about the tables of chiefs, and flattering the pride and greed of lairds. Their faith was simple as their wants were few, and the love of the poor was their richest reward.

The year 1560 marked the death-blow of the old *régime*. But in reality it needed little violence to thrust over an ancient church whose stability had been sapped by those who had ceased long since to live truly in the old traditions. The year just mentioned was the year of Edinburgh, when popery was forbidden in the land, and the celebration of the mass had punishments attached to it. For the first offence the officiating priest was to have his goods confiscated; for the second he was to be banished from the realm; and the reward of a third time's lapse was death itself. It was a movement that appealed with tremendous force to the lords and lairds of Scotland, hungry for the lands of the churchmen; and throwing themselves with all their strength into the upheaval, taking care of their own safety, remembering the accident which happened to Samson of old, they emerged, some of them with fair abbeys to dwell in, or to quarry hewn material from for the building of walls and outhouses; all of them, at any rate, much helped towards enlargement of domain.

The influence of this movement was felt, most naturally, first by the clachans in the vicinity of ecclesiastical establishments, but it penetrated along the straths and glens, till it touched the lives of the simple folks in the clachans there. The chiefs varied much in their relation to the new Protestant faith. MacLean had been abroad, and was convinced of ancient error, and by his immediate influence made his clan probably the earliest Presbyterians of the West. Mackintosh and Lovat also turned their backs on Romanism, the latter securing Beauly by the change. But Glengarry, Chisholm of Strathglass, and Huntly remained

steadfast. The greatest Presbyterian of them all, however, was Argyle.

The relations between the people and the chiefs in this matter of faith presented frequently peculiar features. In some clans it required only the expression of the feudal lord's will, and the docile clansmen obeyed. It is told of more than one community that the chief, having built a little wattled chapel on the side of the way opposite to the old Catholic structure, performed the work of reformation by standing in the space between, and as the quiet clachan people came slowly out to worship, herded them into the new place with his long walking-cane, while like one man they obeyed. It gave those of the old faith an excuse for laughter, and to this day in the west the church of Knox and the Reformers is spoken of as " the church of the yellow stick."

Such implicit obedience was not, however, the rule. For instance, Lovat's people remained Catholic for the most part, though their chief had changed. Nor did the bond of a common faith bind rival chieftains together, teaching them to forget and to bury ancient feud. Argyll was politically distrusted by the Highland leaders, and it was awkward for Protestantism that he was its most influential representative in the north, for certain of the strongly Presbyterian clans, remembering lands reft from them, and power and position diminished and blighted through the political economy of the great head of the Campbells, waited in movements affecting perhaps the most vital interests of the faith, apparently to see on which side Argyll would declare his adherence, when they immediately threw all their weight upon the other. A close study of the history of the Western Presbyterian clans in the Covenanting period will be illuminating in this connection.

In some places the great reforming upheaval hardly made itself felt at all. It never thoroughly broke its way through the mountain barrier into Strathglass, Lochaber, Moidart, Knoydart, Banffshire, and Braemar, which are still to-day haunts of the ancient worship, the district of Morar being especially marked out in this respect from others, being " *Morar beannachte*," " blessed Morar," because till recent times the voice of Protestantism had not been heard within its boundaries. It is even now a truly Catholic

country. The wave of Protestantism, which submerged everything in the low country, broke along the inviolable outposts of the mountains, and rolled back in a long ebb of centuries. Had John Knox and his coadjutors known the Gaelic language the story of the north might have long since been written in terms of another creed. For many a year after Edinburgh had settled its forms of faith the simple Catholicism of the clachan, with faith beyond the forms of faith, moved about the glens. The hearts of the folks in places remote from the scenes of strife were loath to move from familiar moorings. In 1563 Mr Robert Pont was sent to "plant kirks" in the district of Inverness. But he laboured in unresponsive fields, for five years later he was removed to another territory, "where his efforts might have a better chance than they had in the province of Moray." Again, in 1597, a Commission of the Kirk met to confer regarding the securing of ministers, and the establishment of ecclesiastical stations in the same territory; but the clachan was contented with the path the feet of the fathers had been wearing Godwards, and so, even till this day, the kirk is knocking in many places at the same doors which opened not to it over three hundred years ago. It was not till 1658 that a minister was appointed to Kilmallie; it was not till 1726 that Eneas Sage was appointed the first Presbyterian minister of Lochcarron, nor until 1720 did similar appointments touch Kilmonivaig and Glengarry.

The priests who were driven out at the Reformation were not all worthless time-servers; with a pathetic devotion they clung to their people in the remote places, and were supported by their poor adherents with a loyal fidelity which frequently brought much suffering in its trail. Indeed, those who did adhere to the old faith through the risks and persecutions which beset them, became more firmly rooted in Catholicism, and their resolute abidingness the more deeply grounded by the necessity of dogged resistance against oppression. Half of the doors which have been barred against the advance of Reformation principles through the glens owe their continued invincibility to the need that brave and simple hearts felt for holding them firm, and building them sturdily in the days of old.

But the Protestant preachers had their hard times, too, although they represented the party of victory. The people

in some districts would not recognise their claims; in others would not enter the churches; and in many places did not hesitate to show their disapproval by open and secret manifestations of violent hate. Some were actuated to such procedure by resentment of interference with ancient custom; but in many clachans the people had in reality sunk into a condition approaching paganism. Thus in Lochcarron and in Reay, and frequently enough elsewhere, while the minister was in the church the people were in the graveyard tossing the caber, throwing the hammer, leaping and wrestling with one another. Sage, who was a gigantic man of huge strength, won their respect by showing that, though he was a preacher of the gospel of peace, he could hold his own in such things with the manliest of them all, and though attempts were made to hustle him from his purposes, and once an incendiary, caught in his flight and shaken into abject humility of repentance by the strong hand of the preacher, tried to burn the miserable shanty that was the manse, yet time was on the side of the man whose soul was strong, and he won the victory in the conflict between brute strength and moral greatness.

Mr Pope of Reay—contemporary with his better-known namesake, the poet, to whom the northern minister paid a visit at Twickenham, riding the long journey on his little Highland pony—was such another. Failing continually to reach his cateran environment, he at last touched their pride, and so won them to something higher, for he made the novel, if somewhat risky, experiment of making the very worst and most violent characters of his parish elders, and the conceit of importance in the district among their fellows lifted them. The "expulsive force of a new affection" changed them to law-abiding parishioners, while the reputation of their past strong-handed masterfulness kept minor recalcitrants in a state of becoming submission to them.

An influence which was not unfelt by the clachan was one which came forward into notice in the times of conflict between the church in the south and the arrogant spiritual pretensions of King James VI. Ministers like Robert Bruce, men of strong personality, and restlessly assiduous devotion to duty, were banished north of the Tay, and we may be sure their presence was not without effect upon the quiet and earnest communities amongst whom they lived.

KENSINGTON

Alongside of these was all the time the influence of priests who moved about disguised as peasants, and hiding from prying inquisitiveness in caves and barns.

With all the superstitious reverence which attached to the priestly office, there yet was frequently a very curious absence of sacrosanct respect for both the persons and property of ecclesiastics. When the fury of the vendetta prompted, it was nothing for the clansmen to burn rival clansmen in the holy building at the very act of worship. In 1603, in Glengarry's foray into Ross, he set torch to a church, and while the wretched victims perished in the flames, the Macdonald piper marched about the walls mocking the shrieks of the dying with the savage strains of an impromptu pibroch. The clergy seemed to have little power in repressing angry passions in the foray, and what consolations religion could give must have had little effect on the children and women left behind in the clachan, from which all who could carry a claymore had followed the summons of the chief.

In 1647 the kirk was busy waking up ministers in the quiet places to be diligent in seeking out witchcraft of every kind; but it is striking to see them at the same time also passing Acts about the planting of schools. The poison and its antidote grow frequently in the same field. Yet for many a day the poor old crone, left lonely in her dripping hovel, cursing the teasing children as they followed her with gibes, had the risk of torture and death dogging her steps wherever she moved.

Before the Reformation the clergy taught Highland lads who were destined for the Church at Beauly, Rosmarkie, Fearn, Kinloss, and Ardchattan; but after the Reformation, whether the boy were church-infected or no, Knox and his coadjutors had him in their thought, though the suggestion of a school for every parish was hopelessly inadequate, some of the Highland parishes being as large as many a Lowland county.

Public religion fell into terrible straits, and faith was only kept alive at such firesides as remembered her, though they fed her often on strangest foods. The Lords at the Reformation appropriated the noblest revenues of the church, but enacted that every established minister of the church should receive from the parishioners to maintain

their families, and to enable them to perform the duties of the ministry "with comfort and ease," a sum equal to five pounds sterling. In 1724 an application was made to the king for a grant of one thousand pounds for the encouragement of itinerant preachers and catechists to assist the ministers in the Highlands, "especially in parishes where popery and ignorance prevail." Their task was heavy. They had to walk round the heads of estuaries which were too stormy to cross, to ford dangerous rivers, to press through desert places, to get over ferries—paying often exorbitant fares, especially if the ferrymen were Catholics—while all the time they had neither comfortable dwellings nor places suitable for preaching in, though in the furthest districts the Romanists had both.

Cromwell's conquest, when he planted garrisons from Inverness to Stornoway, had great influence of an abiding kind upon the religion of the people. The Puritan soldiers deemed laughter a sin, music and dancing things born of the evil one, and set in the forefront such tokens of grace as the long-jawed visage and the holy groan. These remained, in certain phases of Scottish religion, long after Cromwell's visitation was forgotten.

Scarcity of ministers who had the Gaelic tongue, and want of Bibles for the people, in the vernacular, make their existence very evident in the Acts of Assembly. No preacher who had Gaelic was to be allowed to settle south of the Tay ; some were sent north, among them twenty probationers, in 1698, on pain of losing their licence if they delayed obedience. Highland boys were to be kept at the universities as bursars of the Northern Presbyteries, and the college authorities were to aid the project of the vernacular conversion of the Gael by selecting suitable young men of pious tendencies and eloquent gifts.

In 1690 the Privy Council was asked for a thousand pounds Scots for the purchase of Irish Bibles for the Highlands. Three thousand Bibles, a hundred New Testaments, and three thousand catechisms from London were distributed. But it was not till 1826 that the Scottish Gael got ready access to the whole Scriptures in his own dialect of the Celtic tongues.

Thus in the clachan you find echoes of advancing education, the cripple old soldier, or the man who could

not be a tailor, spelling out the Gospels from the page in the Irish alphabet, and, till the door of modern times, the day opened and the night began with invocations of saints and virgins, even from the lips of those who called themselves Protestant in faith.

CHAPTER XV

JACOBEAN POETRY

The hoof-beat of Sir Robert Carey's horse as he galloped through the night, bearing the momentous tidings which awakened King James of Scotland out of his sleep in Holyrood to be King of Great Britain and Ireland, hammered out a track which was to be the dividing mark between one period of Scotland's life and poetry and all later ones. Away back through the darkness, on the one side of it, lay the age of the "makkaris," the period of northern native lore and utterance. When James jolted along southwards in the track of those deep-trodden hoof-marks, in the old royal coach, with the golf-clubs swinging underneath, he was pointing the life and thought of his country in a fresh direction. It meant the putting of a new tongue in the mouth of the Scottish muse, an unfamiliar tongue which, thinking itself perfectly mellifluous, frequently betrayed its votaries into utterance most uncouthly grotesque. It meant also, through the infatuated obstinate stupidity of the Stewart kings, beginning in the conceit of James himself in regard to his scholarship and learning, the strife of mutual intolerance on the part of Episcopalian and Covenanter, through which, led by their gibbering family phantom of "divine right," the Stewarts staggered out of their kingdom, passing a dripping scaffold on their way.

Poets of this period wrote no longer in the old pure Doric, and though the best of them maintained the technical skill and fluent mastery of rhythm which had marked their predecessors, they wrote in English, being Scottish only in race, and in accidental touches which revealed their nationality. The most vigorous minds of the period devoted themselves to denunciatory preaching and vigorous interpretations of such parts of Scripture as seemed to condemn those who held opinions different from themselves.

Of the Covenant struggles of Scotland, pasquil and pasquinade on the one hand, and sermonic fulminations on the other, gave literary expression where that was required, but the poetry of action, of loyal, brave, self-denial, and of fearless sacrifice even unto death, was the form of the best life of the time.

It was, of course, the fashion to flatter as being the greatest genius and poet of his age, and of all ages, the quaintly self-conceited King James. The extent to which this was carried may be seen in the lines of the verse-writers of his day, and the fall in reputation which came to the lot of the royal scribbler when death took the crown from him, gives a humble view of the true value of human praise. Undoubtedly he was one of the most remarkable mixtures of scholarship, mental acuteness, and folly, which even his country had ever seen. Perhaps the poorest Psalm that David wrote received as much praise as his best production, because of the crown whose shadow was above the harp; and the praises awarded to James in his lifetime, in commendatory verses and flattering dedications, were prompted as much by consideration of rewards which the king could bestow as by anything else in the world.

1566-1625.

The son of his mother had certain outstanding marks of ability assured; the son of his father would be as likely to have weakness and foolishness chasing strength and genius through his soul. He received the benefit of the highest education possible in his time, his tutor being George Buchanan, the greatest scholar and most original mind then living, to whose influence he owed that knowledge of literature and external facility in verse which marked him out from among his fellow sovereigns.

In his eighteenth year he printed in Edinburgh the *Essayes of a Prentise in the Divine Art of Poesie.* Although the quarto was issued anonymously, the introductory verses flattering the author clearly demonstrated his identity. The love of distinction in literature and theology amounted to a passion with him, and there is no doubt that his achievements won genuine admiration, and awakened genuine pride in his subjects, so that the encomiums bestowed upon him probably expressed the real pleasure aroused by the sight of a king who devoted himself to intellectual pursuits, the

kindly flattery which was in the gift of the company of verse-writers always ready to array themselves in line together for the admiration of their fellowmen, as well as that adulation bestowed on the slightest provocation upon the occupant of a throne. Sir William Alexander's maxim is pretty universal in its application :

> "We should in kings, as loth their state to touch,
> Speak sparingly of vice, praise vertue much."

Certainly of James this practice held true. There can be no question, of course, that the poets were disappointed in the harvest vouchsafed to their literary sowing of praises, for, though he was generous in giving them rewards in kind, no man was ever meaner in material gifts. He was generous by accident, or through ignorance that the gift he bestowed had any value, or, on occasions, by sudden and rare impulse.

On his return with his queen from Denmark, he took up his studies once more, and in 1591 a second quarto appeared in Edinburgh entitled *His Maiesties Poeticall Exercises at Vacant Houres*. He had, in 1582, urged on by his advisers, founded the fourth University of Scotland, "The Tounis Colledge," which was opened in Kirk-of-Fields, Edinburgh, in 1583 by Robert Rollock, who became its first Principal in 1586. In 1685, when the Faculty of Medicine was added, it had no fewer than eight Professors.

His accession to the throne of the United Kingdom widened the interest in him, and his *Basilikon Doron* was reprinted. His excursions to Oxford and Cambridge must have made it very difficult for him to keep his head on his shoulders, but must have given opportunity for a smile, even to the grave dons there.

His visit to Scotland in 1617 provoked a kind of literary landslide of Greek, Latin, English, and Scottish verses, foolish and extravagant, in praise of this Solomon of the British throne. This was not without its very definite purpose, for it had been bruited abroad that the king, in his appreciation of English methods, was inclined to suppress at least two of the Scottish Universities, and Aberdeen and Edinburgh were in a fever of anxiety over the matter. Their flatteries, however, saved their life, if indeed it were very seriously threatened. His conceit fostered within him the blind and disastrous conviction of his divine prerogative as

a king. He took upon himself David's function, by laboriously rendering the Psalms into a kind of Anglo-Scottish, under the fostering care of the Earl of Stirling. He has been called "the wisest fool in Christendom," and he certainly was wise in things indifferent, but a babbling fool in things of greatest note, most sacred in the life of man and of the State. He was not greater than his age, which worshipped pedantic conceit in literary form. His verse frequently, like himself, is knock-kneed and unsteady on its feet. His tongue was too big for his mouth, we are told, and the effect of it seems to come out sometimes in his utterance. Nevertheless, the fact of a king who loved to be thought a poet encouraged the cultivation of literary expression, however vicious in taste and form might be the school which resulted therefrom.

In his first book he has a poem *Ane Metaphoricall Invention of a Tragedie called Phœnix*, which seems to bear upon the fortunes of his relative Esme Stewart, Duke of Lennox, whom he had been compelled to banish in 1582:

"Thus quhen I hard so many did complaine,
Some for the losse of worldly wealth and geir,
Some death of frends, quho can not come againe,
Some losse of health, which vnto all is deir,
Some losse of fame, which still with it dois beir
Ane greif to them who mereits it indeid:
Yet for all this appearis there some remeid.

"For as to geir, lyke chance as made you want it,
Restore you may the same agane or mair:
For death of frends, although the same, I grant it,
Can noght returne, yet men are not so rair,
Bot ye may get the lyke: for seiknes sair,
Your health may come, or to ane better place
Ye must: for fame, good deids will mend disgrace."

The poem displays no genius, but considerable industry in the shaping of the verse. The *Lepanto*, suggested by the victory over the Turks in 1571, consists of about one thousand lines, in which occurs a description of Venice, which reads like a paraphrase of a very poor guide-book:

"This towne it stands within the sea,
Fiue miles or there about,
Vpon no ile nor ground; the sea
Runnes all the streets throughout.

Who stood upon the steeple head
  Should see a wondrous sight,
A towne to stand without a ground,
  Her ground is made by slight:
Strong timber props, dung in the sea,
  Do bear her vp by art;
An ile is all her market place,
  A large and spacious part."

This poem was rendered into French by Du Bartas, whose own work, translated by Joshua Sylvester, had some influence on Milton, and in his day won the greatest admiration. He had visited Scotland, and had found the king generous, so he showed his gratitude by characterising the *Lepanto* as being worthy of Homer. James had himself translated a poem of Du Bartas, so that the mutual debt was more than balanced by the compliment.

James had his idea of what constituted a perfect poet:

"Ane rype ingyne, an quicke and walkned witt,
  With sommair reasons, suddenlie applyit,
For euery purpose vsing reasons fitt,
  With skilfulness, where learning my be spyit,
  With pithie wordis for to expres you by it
His full intention in his proper leid,
  The puritie quhairof weill hes he tryit:
With memorie to keip quhat he dois reid,
With skilfulnes and figuris, quhilks proceid
  From Rhetorique, with euerlasting fame,
With vthers woundring, preassing with all speid
  For to atteine to merite sic a name:
  All thir into the perfyte poete be.
Goddis grant I may obteine the laurell trie."

He does not hesitate therein to reveal his own aspirations.

His Psalm work was probably what he had most at heart. Williams, afterwards Archbishop of York, who preached his funeral sermon, published under the title "Great Britain's Salomon," said:

"Hee was in hand (when God call'd him to sing psalmes with the angels) with the translation of our church psalmes, which hee intended to haue finished and dedicated withall to the onely saint of his deuotion, the church of Great Britaine, and that of Ireland. This worke was staied in the one and thirty psalme."

Nevertheless a complete edition appeared at Oxford as *The Psalms of King David translated by King James.* When

this is compared with the manuscript of the king, it is evident that a vast amount of editorial redaction had taken place. Sir William Alexander, in 1627, two years after the death of the king, secured the monopoly for thirty-one years of printing, or causing to be printed, the king's Psalms; but with the usual fortune attending gifts to this man, it proved unprofitable, as the church did not adopt the version. The fact that the people called them " Menstrie's Psalms " showed what the popular notion was. The worth of the king's version may be gauged from verses like this:

" Jehoua satt in the deluge,
And sittis a King for aye,
He also to his people giues
The force thay haue alluaye.

" The same Jehoua great doth blesse
His people well belouid,
With great tranquillitie and peace,
Pray it be not remouid."

King Charles tried in vain to float his father's version on the kirks. Zachary Boyd in 1646 issued a more successful rendering, going even the length of making a metrical paraphrase of the whole of Scripture. The version of Mr Francis Rous, a member of the Long Parliament, with revision and one or two incorporations, secured, however, and still holds, its place in Scottish worship.

Among the Scottish poets of his day, William Lithgow was a pioneer in universal travel. His *Rare Adventures and Painful Peregrinations* do not here affect us, but he claims a place on this page by his work *The Pilgrime's Farewell.* The introductory verses are dedications and compliments, beginning with the nine muses and taking a look in, with suitable flatteries, on the king, the Scottish hierarchy, and the most of the members of the peerage, or at any rate such of them as might have influence to bestow. He bids adieu to North Berwick Law in an address whose phrases would be difficult to eclipse for poetic fatuity:

1582-1645.

" Thou steepie hill, so circling piramiz'd,
That for a prospect serves East Louthiane landes,
While ovile flockes doe feede halfe enamiz'd,
And for a trophee to Northberwicke standes."

His farewell to Scotland echoes genuine truth rather than genuine poetry:

"So dearest soyle, O deare, I sacrifice, now see,
Even on the altar of mine heart a spotless love to thee.
And Scotland now farewell, farewell for many yeares;
This echo of farewell bringes out from mee a world of teares."

In this poem is a picture of the unrest of the world he is moving in, which may well reflect the life of the Stewart Court, where each man strove for his own hand:

"I smyle to see some bragging gentle-men,
That clayme their discent from king Arthur great;
And they will drinke, and sweare, and roare: what then?
Would make their betters foote-stooles to their feet,
And stryve to bee applaus'd with print and pen;
And were hee but a farmer, if hee can
But keepe an hound—O there's a gentle-man! . . .

"And rich men gape, and, not content, seeke more,
By sea and land, for gaine, run manie miles;
The noblest strive for state, ambition's glore,
To have preferment, landes, and greatest stiles,
Yet nev'r content of all, when they have store;
And from the sheepheard to the king, I see,
There's no contentment for a worldlie eye."

He gives also, in this, a name or two additional of Scottish poets:

"Amongst those long goodnightes, farewell ye poets deare,
Grave Menstrie true Castalian fire, quicke Drummond in his spheare.
Brave Murray, ah! is dead, Acton supplies his place,
And Alens high Pernassian veine rare poems doth embrace.
There's manie moe well knowne, whome I cannot explaine,
And Gordon, Semple, Maxwell too, have the Pernassian veine."

Lithgow also wrote *Scotland's Welcome to her Native Sonne and Soveraigne Lord King Charles*, published in Edinburgh in 1633; and *The Gushing Teares of Godly Sorrow, containing the Causis, Conditions, and Remedies of Sinne*, published in 1640. There is no doubt he is also the author of *Scotland's Parœnesis to her dread Soveraign King Charles the Sccond*, printed anonymously in the year 1660, in which there is a marginal reference to the poem *Scotland's Welcome to King Charles in anno* 1633.

He tried his hand at a metrical version of some of the

Psalms, from Buchanan's Latin edition, and eleven of these are preserved amongst Drummond's papers in Drummond's handwriting.

Alexander Craig, who signed himself "Scoto-Britane," wrote *Poetical Recreations*, and *Amorous Songs*, *Sonets*, and *Elegies*. He tried to win favour by thrusting his head on every occasion into the collar of opportunity, and dropping the oil of flattery into the greedy ears of King James.

c. 1567-1627.

Sir Robert Aytoun was a gentleman of birth and education, and wrote a gentleman's verse. He was secretary to Anne of Denmark and to Henrietta Maria. His verse is gloved and spurred. It is the work of a cavalier through and through; it speaks with the well-bred voice of the courtier.

1570-1638.

"I lov'd thee once, I'll love no more,
Thine be the grief, as is the blame;
Thou art not what thou wast before,
What reason I should be the same?
He that can love unlov'd again
Hath better store of love than brain.
God send me love my debts to pay,
While unthrifts fool their love away.

"Yet do thou glory in thy choice,
Thy choice of his good fortune boast:
I'll neither grieve nor yet rejoice,
To see him gain what I have lost.
The height of my disdain shall be
To laugh at him, to blush for thee.
To love thee still, but go no more
A-begging to a beggar's door."

Attributed to Sir Robert Aytoun is a set of verses of great interest, as having influenced the creation of one of the best-known songs the world has heard:

"Should old acquaintance be forgot,
And never thought upon,
The flames of love extinguished,
And freely past and gone?
Is thy kind heart now grown so cold
In that loving breast of thine,
That thou canst never once reflect
On Old-long-syne?"

Simion Grahame, remembered by his *Anatomie of Humors*, dedicated two poems to his patriotism, one *To the famous Isle of Glorious Brittaine*, and the other *To Scotland his Soyle*. Probably through family influence, he was educated under the patronage of the king, which, however, he lost, though later, in 1604, he tried by flattering dedications to recover it. He travelled a great deal. His *Anatomie of Humors* is said to have suggested to Burton the *Anatomie of Melancholy*. It has gloom and cynicism enough in it to suggest anything short of suicide. 1570-1614.

Sir Patrick Hume of Polwart, the antagonist of Montgomerie in the *Flyting*, left the *Promine of King James the Sext*, which for flattery of that monarch eclipses most things in its line.

The crowding of the Scots to court to pick up whatever was going was discouraged by James's successors, and the voice of Scottish flattery became more remote from the throne. Those who approached the king won their contiguity by right of blood and rank. Such, outstandingly, was Montrose, the gallant cavalier who flashed across the page of Scottish history like a meteor. He was only thirty-eight when in 1650, at the hands of the hangman, he gave his life for the cause of the king. He was not only heroic, but a man of the highest culture of his time. Some of his verses appeared in broadsheets. There is a stately spirit of cavalier inspiration in his well-known poem: 1612-1650.

"Like Alexander I will reign,
And I will reign alone,
My thoughts shall evermore disdain
A rival on my throne.
He either fears his fate too much
Or his deserts are small,
That puts it not unto the touch,
To win or lose at all."

He is said to have written on the window of his cell on the night before his execution:

"Let them bestow on ev'ry airth a limb,
Open all my veins, that I may swim
To thee, my Saviour, in that crimson lake,
Then place my purboil'd head upon a stake,
Scatter my ashes, throw them in the air:
Lord, since thou know'st where all these atoms are,
I'm hopeful once thou'lt recollect my dust,
And confident thou'lt raise me with the just."

The cavalier undoubtedly could do a thing like this excellently. He never failed to meet death like a gentleman, however careless or even dissolute he had been in life's easy day.

Spottiswoode, the only son of Sir John Spottiswoode of Darsie, through the same imaginative touch of chivalry characteristic of the time, created for us a picture of immortal pathos. Lying under the same condemnation as Montrose, he was, as Hay says in his *Memoirs*, when the great marquis was about to leave for his place of doom, permitted

> "to give him his last adews in verse, which he did after such a manner that he drew tears out of the Marques' eyes, who leand upon him and kissed him, his hands being all that time tyed with cords."

Such of his lines as have been preserved are more imbued with the spirit of loyalty than of poetry; but dramatic instinct and poetic imagination must have been in his heart, and he is entitled thus to stand, even at the door leading to the scaffold, in touch with Scottish life and poetry.

Montrose had turned from the Covenant and thrown his influence on the side of the king; but the Covenant also had its poet in William Cleland, a native of the south, probably of Dumfriesshire, his father having been in the service of the Marquis of Douglas. A student of St Andrews University, he was impelled by his convictions to throw in his lot with the persecuted Presbyterians, who, maddened by oppression, had been driven to the point of desperate appeal to arms in 1679. Cleland, who was about eighteen years of age, was made an officer, and Drumclog drew from him a display of valour and ability. He was captain at Bothwell Brig, when the stupid squabbling jealousies of the Presbyterian factions brought terrible disaster upon them. He found asylum in the Low Countries, but in 1685 he returned to Scotland, hiding himself in the glens and moors of the West. Bearing arms once more under Argyle, he again found himself an exile and in flight, but in 1688 he returned on behalf of the Scottish exiles at the time of the Revolution. On the raising of the Cameronian Regiment, Cleland was made its lieutenant-colonel, and in the struggles which followed the expulsion of the Stewarts

c. 1661-1689.

in the person of King James II. he bore his share, but at Dunkeld in 1689 he was mortally wounded, and died upon the field.

His topical verses reflect the absolute dislike which the Lowlander bore to the West Highlander, though his own name shows that he was a Celt. The following lines hark back to the outlook of Dunbar and Holland, in his description of the Highlander:

"Their head, their neck, their leggs and thighs,
Are influenced by the skies,
Without a clout to interrupt them;
They need not strip them when they whip them,
Nor loose their doublet when they're hang'd;
If they be miss'd, it's sure they're 'wrang'd.' . . .
Nought like religion they retain,
Of moral honestie they're clean.
In nothing they're accounted sharp,
Except in bag-pipe, and in harpe.
For a misobliging word,
She'll durk her neighbour ov'r the boord,
And then she'll flee like fire from flint,
She'll scarcely ward the second dint.
If any ask her of her thrift,
Foresooth her nain sell lives by thift."

His tongue had a satiric edge on it. Sometimes he lets slip a line or two which warrant us in locating the place of his nativity, and here one catches somewhat of the pulse-beat of Burns, while at the same time the lines in their simple directness betray him as a quiet and keen observer and potent depicter of natural scenes and moods.

"My feet ne'er filed that brooky hill
Where ancient poets drank their fill.
But these who have the Thames and Humber,
The Tees and Tyne, need not them cumber
To go so farre to fetch a drink;
For I am verie apt to think
There's als much vertue, sonce, and pith
In Annan, or the water of Nith,
Which quietly slips by Drumfries,
Als any water in all Greece.
For there and several other places,
About mill-dams, and green brae-faces,
Both elrich Elfs and Brownies stayed,
And green-gown'd Fairies daunc'd and played."

His poem, *Hollow my Fancy, Whither Wilt Thou?* is worthy of consideration:

"When I look before me,
There do I behold
There's none that sees or knows me;
All the world's a-gadding,
Running madding;
None doth his station hold.
He that is below envieth him that riseth,
He that is above, him that's below dispiseth,
So every man his plot and counter-plot deviseth,
Hollow my fancy, whither wilt thou go?

"Hollow, my fancy, hollow,
Stay, stay at home with me;
I can thee no longer follow,
For thou has betrayed me,
And bewrayed me;
It is too much for thee.
Stay, stay at home with me; leave off thy lofty soaring;
Stay thou at home with me, and on thy books be poring;
For he that goes abroad, lays little up in storing:
Thou'rt welcome home, my fancy, welcome home to me."

He is not to be confounded with Major Cleland, the friend of Pope.

The kirk struggles in Scotland were grim, but the censure cannot be laid altogether on the Presbyterians, goaded as these were into rebellion, in order to protect their very right to think and pray. The torch that sets religious persecution aflame is always lit in hell, and leaves black tracks across the green pastures for the devil and his kin to walk in for many a year with mischief.

Despite all that has been written by Scott, Aytoun, and others, the real Covenanter remains an unknown character. He was not a half-mad fanatic holding dialogues with the devil in some dripping cave; nor was he an ignorant farm-lout, lured by curiosity from behind his cattle to march with a scythe-blade on a pole, following the mob to Rullion Green. Neither was he a visionary before whose eyes danced, in the daylight and the dark, the glory that stole through the door chinks of the New Jerusalem. These were amongst them in that day when Greyfriars Churchyard saw the multitude signing their names on the Covenant, laid out on the level stone above the dead, signing, some in their

blood, until night enveloped the scene. These, and many like them, would be found in the ranks that opposed them also. But the best hearts and the best blood of Scotland, earls and barons, were with the peasant in this great cause, impelled by an enthusiasm greater than anything that had ever lifted their nation. Not only was there in the ranks the orator, whose invective screamed its way like a sea-gull about the ears of his hearers; there were quiet men also—men who were at heart lovers of peace, but who loved their country better than their ease, and their religion above all, and so could not sit at the fireside, but had to share the lot of what was, perhaps, the most heterogeneous host that ever trailed a pike to conflict. It is only bias or ignorance which can deny that it was a real sense of necessity that moved the rich and the poor, gentle and simple, cultured and ignorant, as being possessed by a duty towards Christ and fatherland, howsoever they may have interpreted it, rightly or wrongly, yet all stirred to such a degree that home, peace, and life were nothing to them alongside of the victory of faith. One wonders if there ever were in any history men who looked as these men did in the face of God, in the face of men, and in the face of death itself, and were less afraid.

The shining figure of the period is Montrose, truly heroic, living and dying like a brave gentleman; but yet he did not absorb all the interest. Alongside of his intrepid Highlanders, who moved about the mountain passes on his meteor-like campaigns, ready for life or death at the uplifting of his finger, the slower men of the Covenant fill a large and notable place upon the most piteous page of Scotland's history, and the thousand wrongs perpetrated on them in the later "killing time," the wrong of blood, of the torture by the thumbscrew, of the drowning in the tide-race, when the red hoofs of the troopers beat out a furrow over Presbyterian Scotland, have never been forgotten.

Montrose's disastrous defeat at Philiphaugh, in which, as Scott says, he lost the fruit of six splendid victories, found its voice, though without much poetry, in a rugged ballad, composed from the Covenant point of view. Wodrow's *History*, Howie's *Scots Worthies*, *The Cloud of Witness*, *Peden's Prophecies*, and so much more, do not come into our view; but the work of Peter Walker, the

Bristo Port pedlar, with its weird mixture of vision and rhapsody, is nearer the verge of poetry.

The tragic episode of Rullion Green is also commemorated in a rough bit of ballad work from a royalist hand:

"The trumpets blew, and the colours flew,
And every man to his armour drew:
The Whigs were never so much aghast
As to see their saddles toom so fast."

The figure of Dalziel of Binns became to the Covenanters' imagination Homeric. In that desperate stand of theirs in the Pentland mists, with their backs against despair and their faces looking into the valley of the shadow of death, they fancied that they saw their bullets dance, harmless as hailstones, off his buff coat, and so they felt certain then that it was true he had sold himself to the devil, who always looks faithfully after his own. It was, according to their own confession, this same belief in regard to James Sharp that made the Covenanters despatch that renegade with cold steel when he fell into their hands on Magus Moor. Drumclog, with its moon-glint of victory, and Bothwell Brig, with its disaster, are both recorded in rugged lines of Covenanting sympathies. Claverhouse, of course, is in these the Mephistopheles; and one can quite understand it all, when one reads the ferocity of the royalist rhyming statement of the campaign:

"The brave Dalyell stood i' the field,
And fought for King and Crown, man;
Made rebel Whigs perforce to yield,
And dang the traitors doun, man.
Then some ran here, and some ran there,
And some in field did fa', man,
And some to hang he didna spare,
Condemned by their ain law, man. . . .

"The Royal Duke his men forsook,
And o'er the field did ride, man,
And cried aloud to spare their blude,
Whatever might betide, man.

"But Colonel Graham of noble fame,
Had sworn to have his will, man,
No man to spare in armour there,
While man and horse could kill, man."

The Covenanting cause was sympathetically dealt with in what was once very popular verse by Hyslop, but the best expression of the feeling of the nation-shaking episode is that by Robert Reid, a poet of our own time:

"Bury me in Kirkbride,
Where the Lord's redeemed anes lie:
The auld Kirkyaird on the grey hillside,
Under the open sky,
Under the open sky,
On the briest o' the braes sae steep,
And side by side wi' the banes that lie
Streikt in their hinmaist sleep:
This puir dune body maun sune be dust,
But it thrills wi' a stoun' o' pride,
To ken it may mix wi' the great and just
That slumber in thee, Kirkbride. . . .

"Little o' peace or rest
Had we that hae aften stude
Wi' oor face to the foe on the mountain's crest,
Sheddin' oor dear heart's blude,
Sheddin' oor dear heart's blude,
For the richts that the Covenant claimed,
And ready wi' life to make language gude
Gin the King or his Kirk we blamed.
And aften I thocht in the dismal day
We'd never see gloamin' tide,
But melt like the cranreuch's rime that lay
I' the dawn, abun' Kirkbride."

"Wheesht! Did the saft win' speak?
Or the yaumerin' nicht-bird cry?
Did I dream that a warm haun' touch't my cheek
And a winsome face gae'd by,
And a winsome face gae'd by,
Wi' a far-off licht in its een,
A licht that bude come frae the dazzlin' sky,
For it spak' o' the starnies sheen;
Age may be donart, and dazed and blin',
But I'se warrant, whate'er betide,
A true heart there made tryst wi' my ain
And the tryst-word seemed Kirkbride."

CHAPTER XVI

ALEXANDER, DRUMMOND OF HAWTHORNDEN, AND THE SEMPILLS

THE most prominent and notable of the poets at the court of James was William Alexander, afterwards Earl of Stirling, who was of ancient West Highland descent, his lineage being from that Lord of the Isles who married Princess Margaret, daughter of Robert II. He was of the MacAlastair branch of the great Clan Donald, his ancestors having, when they settled upon the grants of land which they received at Menstrie, translated their name into the English form. In the same house where he was born Sir Ralph Abercromby also saw the light of a later day

1567-1640.

On leaving the University of Glasgow he travelled on the continent with the Duke of Argyle, probably amusing himself with the composition of those sonnets which he published afterwards under the title of *Aurora*. On his return he went to court, and became speedily known as a gentleman of talent and attainments. He published a series of "monarchicke tragedies," which, by 1607, had included the tragedies of *Darius*, *Crœsus*, *The Alexandrœan*, and *Julius Cæsar*. In 1612 he wrote his elegy on the death of Prince Henry, and in that year he was knighted. A stream of benefactions, such as have seldom been bestowed on any subject, fell to him from the hand of James. He received a gift and grant of the Canadas, including Acadie, or Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland. The magnitude of the gift almost certainly, considering James's character for generosity, displays that monarch's ignorance of geography.

Seven years before this he had published his *Doomesday*, which in extent, if not in genius, is worthy of the magnitude of its subject.

He formed a scheme of colonisation in connection with his gift, and sold baronetcies of Nova Scotia, enfeoffing his baronets on a portion of the esplanade of Edinburgh Castle, which, for the purpose, had been called Nova Scotia. The French conquest in Canada, however, rendered his gifts valueless, and prevented his baronets from possessing their six square miles of territory, which went with their title for the £150 which they paid. Their disgust found vent in condemnation of Alexander, whom they blamed for sycophantic greed. Everything seemed to turn towards him. He was Secretary of State for Scotland in 1630, Lord Alexander of Tullibody, and Viscount Stirling, next year an extraordinary judge in the Court of Session, and two years later Earl of Stirling and Viscount Canada. In 1637 he gathered his works together, and issued them as *Recreations of the Muses*. He died, however, in poverty, in London on 12th September 1640, leaving his titles and shadowy inheritances to be, until this day, the goal of the quest of countless Alexanders, whose only comfort is the thought that they are his heirs, if only something which they never can do could be done.

Alexander is an example of the risk of accepting contemporary estimate. A man may seem large because he is too near the eye of his generation; in lengthened perspective he falls into his proper place, and thereby may drop into oblivion. Drummond of Hawthornden, a far better poet, thought that his friend eclipsed even Tasso. It is almost certain that he acted as King James's literary and poetical ghost, otherwise the royal generosities cannot, even in part, be explained. Although it has been pointed out by Professor Walker and others that there is no trace of the influence of Shakespeare in Alexander's work, while he was writing at the same time as the Giant of Avon, yet one finds in *Darius*:

> "Should this worldly pomp our wits enchant
> All fades, and scarcely leaves behind a token."

which, as has been pointed out, recalls instantly Shakespeare's:

> "And, like this unsubstantial pageant, faded,
> Leave not a rack behind."

It has been suggested that Shakespeare did not disdain

to borrow from Alexander. It could hardly be believed that Shakespeare did this when he wrote:

"Let me have men about me that are fat!"

while Alexander said:

"No corpulent sanguinians make me feare!"

No man in Scotland ever enjoyed so deeply the jealousy of his fellow-countrymen. In the worst and meanest years of James he had to occupy the unfortunate position of being the buffer between the king and the people. He thus became a kind of pin-cushion, receiving all manner of prickly darts of hate and scorn, and, when he died, he died crushed.

He certainly darned the patchwork bed-cover of the Metrical Psalms of which the king was so proud, if he did not, indeed, sew more than the half of it. In this matter of Psalms the king had set a fashion. It was considered the proper thing to be tinkering at versions. But His Majesty considered it somewhat in the light of a royal monopoly. In fact, at this time, Drummond of Hawthornden had sent to Sir William Alexander a sample of what he could do in such matters, receiving a reply which, had the king seen it, would certainly have cost that poet his grant of Canada.

"I received your last letter, with the Psalm you sent; which I think very well done. I had done the same long before it came; but He prefers his own to all else, though perchance, when you see it, you will think it the worst of the three. No man must meddle with that subject; and therefore I advise you to take no more pains therein."

The influence of continental poetry, along with that of Surrey and Wyatt, is evident in his *Aurora*, a collection of conceits regarding love. His tragedies are most tragical because they are failures, having neither relation to the productions of antiquity nor to the great manifestations of the Elizabethan imagination. That highest culmination of human genius which the world has ever seen does not really seem to have touched him. Loaded with his bulky freight, he moved along the fringe of this period, and did not seem affected by the billows of the great deep underneath his keel. The *Alexandræan Tragedie* opens with a speech by the ghost of Alexander the Great, whose lugubrious locutions

extend through five pages. It is apparent, therefore, that the author himself describes one of them truly as a "polytragicke tragedie." He has left nothing in blank verse, but wrote his tragedies and long poems in quatrains, a scheme which tends, in a composition of any magnitude, to make for lumbering utterance, as each thought waddles through four lines, and lacks that compact directness which makes for tragic poetry.

His poem *Doomesday* had a commendatory introduction by Drummond of Hawthornden, to whom he once read it aloud—a severe trial of friendship, for Drummond must have thought Doomsday itself would come before he had finished, as it contains some eleven thousand lines. It is an *omnium gatherum* and general repository of everything in the Bible, in secular history, and heathen mythology, with an exhaustive list of the pains of hell and the joys of heaven. His *Recreations of the Muses* makes one feel that the divine goddesses had sometimes a heavy foot and a weary wing. He hit the mark in regard to much of his own work when he described it as a "*measured* fury."

Murray of Gorthy, like others, probably thought he could win promotion at court by that subtle cozening of James, which had its roots in imitation, the pseudo-poetic monarch, feeling that he ought to be considerate to sparrows of poetry, who flattered in their chirping the great royal eagle of the British Parnassus. He had no originality, but trod so closely on the heels of Alexander that his poetical utterances seem sometimes to have been provoked by tripping on the cloak of his predecessor.

Entirely on a different level is William Drummond of Hawthornden, a court poet, though he did not haunt the court, but lived on his own beautiful domain, in his house on the top of the crag, where the Esk sings seawards through the trees. 1585-1649.

He was a strong mouthpiece of the Italian school, and in his work was almost entirely English. Edinburgh and France gave him his education. One of the ablest men of his time, familiar with ancient and modern languages, he turned from the law, which he had chosen as his profession, and devoted himself to literature and mechanical philosophy. His reading during his tour abroad for the study of the law, and the library which he stocked for himself at Hawthornden,

prove him to have been up to date in literary matters of his day; while the influence of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet* is plainly echoed in certain of his melodious numbers. He joined with Alexander in 1613 in lamenting the death of Prince Henry. He celebrated, by his *Forth Feasting*, the king's visit to Scotland in 1617, fourteen years after that remarkable monarch had crossed the Border into his southern kingdom. It was essentially a courtier's poem, a kind of composition which sets up Fancy for its sail, and steers as far away as possible from the stern shores of Truth. This may be seen at once convincingly when he calls James:

> "O virtue's pattern, glory of our times, . . .
> Great King, but better far than thou art great
> Whom State not honours, but who honours state; . . .
> To be for this thy reign which wonder brings,
> A king of wonder, wonder unto kings!"

He had learned, however, the true thing, for a sorrow of his own wrote its deep emotions on his heart. His famous *Poems, Amorous, Funerall, Divine, Pastorall, in Sonnets, Songs, Sextains, Madrigals*, were published in 1616. He attained truth through the door of sorrow in the loss which came to him of Miss Cunningham of Barnes, on the eve of their marriage.

In 1618 occurred the famous visit of Ben Jonson, with its consequent controversy over the notes which the one poet kept of the other's conversation.

His own experience gave him subject matter for thought and word. Conceits were drowned in the deep waters where love struggled with sorrow. The personal pathos of Nature came into his utterance as if he had found a secret postern in the house of Poesy:

> "To hear my plaints, fair river crystalline,
> Thou in a silent slumber seem to stay . . .
> The winds with sighs have solemnized my moans
> 'Mong leaves which whispered what they could not say."

Death, the awakener, touched his heart to song worthy of his genius. A tender melancholy like the sigh of the wind in the trees, or the sob of the still waters near his dwelling, moves through his verse hereafter. It moves—it has no stagnant moment in its life.

The Platonic thought, which has through the centuries played as with the light of a star upon earth's finer minds, had a haunting charm for him, the thought

> "That at the time when first our souls are fram'd,
> Ere in these mansions blind they come to dwell,
> They live bright rays of that eternal light,
> And others see, know, love, in heaven's great height,
> Not toil'd with aught to reason doth rebel,
> Most true it is, for straight at the first sight
> My mind me told, that in some other place
> It elsewhere saw the idea of that face,
> And lov'd a love of heavenly pure delight;
> No wonder now I feel so fair a flame
> Sith I her lov'd ere on this earth she came."

His mourning for the lady of his love, lost now beyond all recall, shut off by death's fast doors, floods the second part of this book with the tenderest beauty. It is no feigned sorrow, whipping up poetic fancy to take the hill; the voice of genuine feeling speaks in many lines which should not have oblivion as their reward:

> "If ruth and pity there above be found,
> O deign to lend a look unto those tears.
> Do not disdain, dear ghost, this sacrifice,
> And though I raise not pillars to thy praise,
> Mine offerings take; let this for me suffice,
> My heart a living pyramid I raise;
> And whilst kings' tombs with laurels flourish green
> Thine shall with myrtle and these flowers be seen."

The directness of the contact, of this sorrow saved him from conventions in art, which like weeds, were creeping into the garden of poetry in his day. His *Poems, Amorous, Funerall, Divine, Pastorall, in Sonnets, Songs, Sextains, Madrigals*, contain the best and highest of his work, entitling him among other things to a pre-eminent position as a sonnet-writer. A new individual power of expression is surely felt also in this:

> "O Pan, Pan, winter is fallen in our May,
> Turn'd is in night our day;
> Forsake thy pipe, a sceptre take to thee,
> Thy locks disgarland, thou black Jove shalt be.
> Thy flocks do leave the meads,
> And, loathing three-leav'd grass, hold up their heads;
> The streams not glide now with gentle roar,
> Nor birds sing as before;

Hills stand with clouds, like mourners, veil'd in black,
And owls on cabin roofs foretel our wrack.
That zephyr every year
So soon was heard to sigh in forests here,
It was for her; that wrapt in gowns of green,
Meads were so early seen,
That in the saddest months oft sung the merles,
It was for her; for her trees dropt forth pearls.
That proud and stately courts
Did envy those our shades, and calm resorts,
It was for her; and she is gone, O woe!
Woods cut again do grow,
Bud doth the rose and daisy, winter done,
But we, once dead, no more do see the sun."

His *Flowers of Sion* and *The Cypresse Grove* have much that is remarkable in them, but there is modernness of spirit in such a sonnet as this, *For the Baptist*, along with something of that atmosphere which, when Dante Gabriel Rossetti puts out his hand and touches a majestic chord of mystery, makes the heart pause and feel a stillness round it.

"The last and greatest herald of heaven's King,
Girt with rough skins, hies to the deserts wild,
Among that savage brood the woods forth bring,
Which he than man more harmless found and mild:
His food was locusts, and what young did spring,
With honey that from virgin hives distill'd;
Parch'd body, hollow eyes, some uncouth thing
Made him appear long since from earth exil'd.
There burst he forth: 'All ye, whose hopes rely
On God, with me amidst these deserts mourn:
Repent, repent, and from old errors turn.'
Who listen'd to his voice, obey'd his cry?
Only the echoes which he made relent,
Rung from their marble caves, 'Repent, Repent!'"

It is natural that the fame of a man who could write like this should grow widely. His poetic friendship with Alexander opened the door to others of a congenial kind, and especially to that with Michael Drayton, of *Polyolbion* note, who in his epistle on *Poets and Poesy* pays a warm tribute to the two Scottish poets.

"So Scotland send us hither for our own
That man whose name I ever would have known
To stand by mine, that most ingenious knight
My Alexander, to whom in his right
I want extremely. Yet in speaking thus,
I do but show the love that was 'twixt us,

And not his numbers ; which were brave and high,
So like his mind was his clear poesy.
And my dear Drummond, to whom much I owe,
For his much love, and proud was I to know
His poesy. For which two worthy men,
I Menstrie still shall love, and Hawthornden."

He has the gift of drawing the heart of his reader—or rather listener—for his poems are vocal creations, rather than mere verbal monuments on a printed page—right out over the abyss of eternal thought, through the power of his words. This surely is a poetic touchstone of creative genius :

"When I, whose eyes no drowsy night could close,
In sleep's soft arms did quietly repose,
And, for that heavens to die me did deny,
Death's image kissed, and as dead did lie.
I lay as dead, but scarce charmed were my cares,
And slaked scarce my sighs, scarce dried my tears,
Sleep scarce the ugly figures of the day
Had with his sable pencil put away,
And left me in a still and calmy mood."

He is the pioneer in verse of the spirit of the woodland. The silken trail of soft leaves, fancy - stirred, moves like a dream on pilgrimage through his verse in a manner that never before was known as an influence in our poesy, and only came in suggestive fulness in our own day.

"My lute, be as thou wast when thou didst grow
With thy green mother in some shady grove,
When immelodious winds but made thee move,
And birds on thee their ramage did bestow.
Sith that dear voice which did thy sounds approve,
Which us'd in such harmonious strains to flow,
Is reft from earth to tune those spheres above,
What art thou but a harbinger of woe?
Thy pleasing notes be pleasing notes no more,
But orphan wailings to the fainting ear,
Each stop a sigh, each sound draws forth a tear :
Be therefore silent as in woods before,
Or if that any hand to touch thee deign,
Like widow'd turtle, still her loss complain."

This is the voice of sylvan stillness, through which the shiver of running water is heard sometimes like a living

grief. It is the voice of Hawthornden speaking through the depths of its poet's heart:

> "Dear wood, and you, sweet solitary place
> Where from the vulgar I estranged live. . . .
> Ah, if I were mine own, your dear resorts
> I would not change with princes' stately courts."

The love of solitude possessed his soul. This, at any rate, is not an echo of Gray, nor of Milton. Did it linger in the ear of both of these great masters of true harmony of phrase?

> "What sweet delight a quiet life affords
> And what it is from bondage to be free,
> Far from the madding worldlings' hoarse discords
> Sweet flow'ry place, I first did learne from thee."

He had the artistic outlook upon Nature. Douglas saw, and once or twice felt, the power of the human contact with the outer world; in one sweep of his pencil he drew the creatures "wet and weary in the fen." But Drummond set the beating of his own heart in tune with Nature's. The clear sheen of snow upon the hills made for him a picture of natural beauty, not a thing of fear; and the remembrance of the gleam of the frost-bound Alps, which he had seen in European travel, clothed with majesty the hills of his native land. They, too, appealed to him as a patriot:

> "Here hills aspire. . . .
> Hills, bulwarks of our freedome, giant walls
> Which never fremdling's[1] slight nor sword made thralls."

In these things Drummond spoke with the voice of a discoverer, and gave a fresh thought to the poetry of Scotland. As a poet, both in spirit and feeling, in interpretative vision, and in volume, he is more frequently than others over the fringe of the very noblest levels, a true Scottish Spenserian, with intense love of beauty and colour, and mastery of musical utterance.

The Sempills were a notable family. We have seen Robert and his work. Sir James was son of that John Sempill whom Knox calls "the dancer." He married one of the "Queen's Maries" called Livingston. He was educated at court, and was ambassador to England in 1599, and to France in 1601. He wrote a satire entitled *A Pick-tooth for the Pope, or the Pack-man's Pater Noster*

[1] Foreigners.

set down in a Dialogue between a Pack-man and a Priest. An edition of it was published in 1669, augmented and enlarged by his son Robert, and inserting a sonnet by one Alexander Sempill. It contains arguments against purgatory and the other topics of dispute with the Roman Catholic Church

Robert Sempill of Beltrees was the son of the author of the "Pack-man" satire. His *Life and Death of Habbie Simson, the Piper of Kilbarchan*, achieved immortality through the fact that his verse was accepted as the model of subsequent vernacular composition. Ramsay styled it "standard *Habbie*." In fact, it is due to this ballad that on the town steeple of Kilbarchan there is to-day a full-size figure, in stone, of Habbie playing his pipes. Sempill was a cavalier, and threw his influence into the Restoration movement. His ballad was strongly instrumental in securing the revival of Scottish vernacular verse. The poem appeared anonymously in *Watson's Collection* in 1706, but continual tradition had ascribed it to Sempill, although Leyden, in his dissertation on the *Complaynt of Scotland*, attributed it to Hamilton of Gilbertfield. The poem is genuinely native, and records the festivals and country customs of olden days, wherein you can see the piper "teethless, auld, and teuch" at wappinshaw, market, "clark-plays," races, bridals, and kindred functions. 1595-1659.

Francis Sempill was son of the preceding, humorous, quick, and vivid. In his longest poem, the *Banishment of Povertie by James, Duke of Albany*, which records the poet's disgrace, debt through suretyship, and with much humour describes his time spent in the debtors' sanctuary at Holyrood. He represents poverty as his inseparable comrade from the day when he shook hands with him at Kilbarchan, when first he took up suretyship for another. He cannot escape his companion: 1616-1682.

"The morn I ventur'd up the Wyne,
And slundg'd in at the Nether Bow,
Thinking that trowker for to tyne,
Who does me damage what he dow. dare
His company he does bestow
On me to my great grief and pain;
Ere I the throng cou'd wrestle throw,
The lown was at my heels again.

"I green'd to gang on the Plain-stanes,
To see if comrades wou'd me ken;
We twa gaid pacing there our lains,
The hungry Hours 'twixt Twelve and Ane."

Driven to take refuge from his creditors in the well-known sanctuary at Holyrood Abbey, where many a wretched bankrupt found similar shelter until imprisonment for debt was abolished in 1820, he was relieved from stress and anxiety by the Duke of Albany, whose generosity he commemorates in his whimsical verse:

"An hour or twa I did not tarry,
When my blest fortune was to see
A sight, sure by the mights of Mary,
Of that brave Duke of Albany;
When one blink of his princely eye
Put that foul foundling to the flight;
Frae me he banish'd Pouerty,
And made him take his last Good-night."

The *Epitaph on Sanny Briggs*, who was butler to the Sempill family, was the production of either Francis or Robert. It is uncertain, also, whether *The Blithesome Bridal* and *Maggie Lauder* belong to the father or the son, though it has been most steadily attributed to the latter. *Maggie Lauder* is inimitable, and it is truly Scottish.

"Wha wadna be in love
Wi' bonnie Maggie Lauder?
A piper met her gaun to Fife
And spiered what was't they ca'd her;
Richt scornfully she answered him,
'Begone, you hallan-shaker!
Jog on your gate, you bladderskate!
My name is Maggie Lauder.'

"'Maggie!' quoth he, 'and, by my bags,
I'm fidgin' fain to see thee:
Sit down by me, my bonnie bird;
In troth I winna steer thee,
For I'm a piper to my trade;
My name is Rob the Ranter;
The lassies loup as they were daft
When I blaw up my chanter.'

"'Piper,' quo' Meg, 'hae ye your bags,
Or is your drone in order?
If ye be Rob, I've heard o' you
Live you upo' the Border?

The lassies a' baith far and near
Have heard o' Rob the Ranter,
I'll shake my foot wi' richt gude will
Gif ye'll blaw up your chanter.'

"Then to his bags he flew wi' speed;
About the drone he twisted;
Meg up and walloped ower the green,
For brawly could she frisk it,
'Weel done!' quo' he. 'Play up!' quo' she.
'Weel bobbed!' quo' Rob the Ranter,
'It's worth my while to play, indeed,
When I hae sic a dancer!'"

It is so characteristic and has such verve and vivacity that it is entitled to its place on the page of Scottish poetry. It takes you out into the open air, the wind is on the moorland, the cloud-wisp on the hill, and sometimes as you linger all your lone you hear the piper playing still to Maggie Lauder's dancing! Sempill it was who gave the haunting refrain to Scottish verse, so beautifully universalized by Burns in his *Auld Lang Syne*, which clasps loving hands round the world.

Somewhat similar to the work of Sir James Sempill was a discursive polemic in verse by John Barclay, minister of Cruden, which appeared in 1689. Other ecclesiastical poems of the period were: *The Turtledove*, in 1664, by John Fullerton of Careltoun; *Saints' Recrimination*, by William Geddes, minister of the gospel first at Wick in Caithness, and at Urquhart in Moray, part only being printed, first in Edinburgh in 1683, and next in Glasgow in 1753 and 1758; *The Mirror of Divine Love*, unveiled in a paraphrase of the high and mysterious Song of Solomon, with other poems, sacred and moral, by Robert Fleming, junior, London, 1691. This last included some versions of four odes of Pindar. There were also *Divine Poems* by Arthur Nasmyth, 1565, and *Mel Heliconium or Poetical Honey gathered out of the Weeds of Parnassus*, which appeared in London in 1642, by Alexander Ross, chaplain-in-ordinary to the king, having been compelled to fly to London because of his adherence to Episcopacy. These men are entirely forgotten, with the exception of the last named, who lives because of the reference to him with laughter in Butler's *Hudibras*:

"There was an ancient sage philosopher,
Who had read Alexander Ross over!"

a task which Butler evidently considered the limit of human endurance and perseverance.

Sir Robert Kerr was a friend of Drummond of Hawthornden. He was made by King Charles I. a gentleman of the bedchamber, and in 1633 was created Earl of Ancram. His eldest son, who had been made Earl of Lothian, deserted the king, but Ancram remained faithful. After the tragedy in front of Whitehall he passed over into Holland, and died at Amsterdam. His verses have been either scattered or lost, but the sonnet to Drummond, *In Praise of a Solitary Life*, is preserved. When one remembers how he had to kill in a duel Charles Maxwell, more notable for his size and wealth than for his education and politeness, one can understand the depth of meaning in these lines of this sonnet:

> "Most happy state, that never tak'st Revenge
> For Injuries received, nor dost fear
> The Court's great earthquake, the griev'd truth of change,
> Nor none of Falsehood's savoury lyes dost hear,
> Nor know'st Hope's sweet disease, that charms our sense,
> Nor its sad Cure, dear-bought Experience."

CHAPTER XVII

THE HIGHLANDS BEFORE 1745

In the Highlands in olden days, before 1745, the chief required, in his own interests, to keep about him, and within reach of his call, a body of fearless retainers, the inner circle of whom could prove descent from the same ancestors, others, of course, being content to take the great name of the district for influence or for protection. Hence arose the magnitude of the tribes of Stewarts, Campbells, Macdonald, MacLeans, and the like, it being by no means a necessity that the same blood flowed in all who fought beneath the shelter of one banner. The great influence of the Argyles, their acute political instincts, and the fear with which they clothed themselves in the west, make it almost a necessity for many an adventurer who had reached the end of his tether to find such security and opportunity as might be theirs through attachment to the retinue of MacCailean Mòr. Of course, once there, there was no escape again; but many a man who had changed his name, and hastily swallowed down his ambitions and prejudices in one gulp together, was all the more thankful for the safety he secured by adopting the great name of Campbell, and was all the more loyal to his new chief when he remembered how the gallows rope still dangled dangerously near his neck, at the front door of the world he had fled from. In this way Rob Roy himself crept under the Campbell shadow; but everybody remembers how it irked him, until he could cry out: "My foot is on my native heath, and my name's MacGregor!" In the same way in the Highlands of Aberdeenshire, in Strathdon and Braemar, and in the Braes of Moray, Watts, and Michies, Stewarts and Allans, MacHardies and Couttses, running out of a hundred feuds with blood upon them, were glad to swell the ranks of the Gordons or Farquharsons in their need.

The life of such a period was beset with uncertainty for

high and low, tuned very frequently to breaking musi when the hate or revenge of rival clans swept through th glens, leaving behind them smoking roofs and blackene walls, with widows and orphans wailing their dead. Th chiefs were over their tribes stronger and sterner than kings The power of pit and gallows gave them also the power o a thousand tortures when they were provoked. It was fo some venial offence that, just at the door of modern times, one of them bound a poor woman, and tying her by her hair within highwater mark, left her screaming till the creeping tide crawling over her anguish silenced her. The notches worn by the ropes in the hanging-tree near the houses of the chiefs were fresh enough, many of them, very little more than one hundred and fifty years ago. The result was that while love for the chiefs may have been dominant, as in countless cases it pathetically was, terror lest anger of the all-powerful, irresponsible head of the race should be awakened must have sat like a ghost at many a poor threshold. And there was absolute truth in the picture of the woman whose husband had many objections to the proposal, while the halter was round his neck, begging him to go away quietly and be hanged " to please the laird ! "

To live on the border-line of the Highlands, or in the low country opening into the glens, was to keep, by necessity, one's glance over one's shoulder, and to sleep with at least one ear awake. Like the sudden rising of a Highland burn, you never knew when a swift spate of violent invasion would bring down din and disaster to your fields. Once behind the bulwark of the hills, the reiver snapped his fingers at pursuit, for none dared follow him into the mountain fastnesses. It was only those who could afford it that could purchase immunity by means of blackmail. As for the rest, day and night had each their peculiar fears waiting to be stirred to a wide-eyed awakening by the impetuous and masterful onset of the soft-footed agile cateran, who could sweep a homestead clean as if a whirlwind had leapt from the mountain down upon the plains. It was in vain that Government tried by threats to stop what had grown to be looked upon by the mountaineer as both an established custom and a right. Little good was done by the method of taking bonds from clan chiefs and feudal superiors, whereby these undertook the responsibility for their clansmen,

tenants, and dependants, the more important of whom themselves in like manner gave bonds of security to their chief.

You find, for example, in 1672, Farquharson of Invercauld giving a bond like this for the peace of the Highlands, in which he undertakes that he himself, with his tenants and servants and all persons of his name, descended of his family, shall commit no " violence, deforcement, theft, ryfe, and fire-raising upon deadly feuds, under penalty of three thousand marks." It does not, of course, mention where the money is to be got when wanted, or who will be daring enough to knock at Invercauld's door asking for it. At the same time, he has authority granted to him to extract from his chieftains a similar undertaking, failing which he has the right to apprehend and imprison them until they give obedience. A very good specimen of such a document of relief is one by Donald Farquharson of Balfour, son of Finzean, dated the next year, wherein, acknowledging the practice of theft and other crimes ordinarily committed in the Highlands, he binds himself for some Watts, Gordons, and others that they shall commit no murders hereafter " upon deadly feud."

Another form which the efforts of the Privy Council took was to bind tenants in their leases to live peaceably under certain penalties, such as the loss of one year's rent.

There is in existence a most interesting note for the year 1689-90 of losses, through raid and foray, entailed by certain farms on Lord Forbes's lands in the vicinity of the mountains of upper Aberdeenshire. One farm had been stripped of eighty wedders. On another branch of his estate a tenant had lost twenty-seven oxen, twelve cows, and seven horses ; while one person alone, on the 14th September 1690, had missed twelve score wedders, because John Stewart and his company from Strathdon had called in on their way, impelled by a strong desire for mutton. Altogether the tenants of Lord Forbes in the neighbourhood of Strathdon had suffered to the extent of over three thousand pounds in these two years. The robber band was a mixed set of very select thieves, who had gathered from various districts—Farquharsons, MacLauchlans, and Shaws, with Meldrums, Stewarts, and MacIntoshes from Strathdon. It had evidently been a season of bold-handed rapine, in revenge

for the deliberate attempt of Lord Forbes to put a stop to the form of amusement which had been annoying and impoverishing his district. It had been a co-operative effort, and they had apparently been intercepted driving their rich booty up the drove-road of Strathdon, for most of them had been glad to pass themselves under the protection of the lords of districts remote from their usual habitation, carrying their lives in their hands and their hearts in their mouths probably for the rest of their days.

In 1699 the committee who were considering what was best to be done for the peace of the Highlands, proposed that a garrison be established at Ruthven of at least thirty sentinels, with a captain and subalterns ; that thirty men be posted in the parish of Ardclach ; and that forty be stationed at Glenmoriston, all, if possible, Highlanders favourable to law and order.

It was evidently suspected, too, that the Highland chiefs and lairds, when they gave lists of their restless and riotous adherents, only gave those for whom they could never be held responsible, carefully leaving out the notable thieves and robbers of their clans ; but now it was proposed that all who resided in any chief's territory, and all who even for twenty-four hours found shelter within his lands, should be looked upon as having passed under his responsibility ; while, if the chiefs failed to apprehend such robbers and thieves as were proved guilty, they must surrender themselves at the Castle of Blackness, or other royal castles, as hostages until the robbers were produced. At the same time a system of running down the trail to its termination was suggested, which could hardly fail to end at the stronghold of the caterans. Thus, if goods were traced into one territory, if the track went further, the men of that district were to rise and follow it through the next man's land, and so forth, till all traces terminate, otherwise whoso refuses this duty shall be personally held fully reliable for the theft. Naturally the chiefs and Highland heritors, especially the Farquharsons, Forbeses, and Gordons, protested against this drastic provision, declaring that they abhorred most heartily the disorders which were rending the Highlands, but that this new burden was too heavy for them. Nevertheless, Monaltrie, the Earl of Mar, Invercauld, and others

above Culbleen, gave a list of men for whom they would be responsible, and a most interesting set of names it is, including Deys, Couttses, Downies, Ledinghams, Clarks, and Morgans, Watts, Yules, Finnies, Toughs, Strachans, Alanachs, Reids, and Morices, with a band of MacRobies.

The next year we find a commission given by Lord Forbes to the laird of Auchintoul, which speaks of the daily and nightly incursions of Highlanders and broken and loose men; and Auchintoul, probably very much against his will, is required to search for and secure them, while the heritors within the Presbytery of Kincardine give a note of individuals for whose persons they offer reward, including Alastair Mòr and John Roy, otherwise known as M'Kinriacha, while any person apprehending "a sorroner, or lordless man," shall have ten pounds Scots paid to him for his pains. Alastair Mòr was captured, but did not hesitate in 1702 to petition the Lord High Chancellor and Lords of His Majesty's most honourable Privy Council "for that piety and mercy which had formerly been held out to others as great criminals as he had been," pleading the misfortunes of his education and the hardship of his having been obliged to follow necessity, along with his unfitness for death, "there being near him no minister to exhort him, who could speak his own language." He pleaded, for the sake of Christ Jesus, that they should take his lamentable condition into serious consideration, and change his punishment of death into banishment or imprisonment. The petition was received, and Alastair was committed into the sure ward and safe custody of Aberdeen Tolbooth until further orders. But poor Alastair was not to be allowed to win advantage of clemency, for the commission of justiciary in the Highlands lodged their protest, beginning:

"When by the good providence of God and the diligence of Brigadier Maitland, that notorious robber came to be apprehended, we look upon it as a very special deliverance, considering that from his youth up, now this very many years beginning with rebellion against his majesty, he hath been a continual depredator, and a ring-leader of robbers, robbing in all corners thereof, likas when he cam to be tryed before us, your lordships have seen what wicked and violent robberies have been proven against him; yet thes are not the halfe of what he is still guilty of; so that most certainly he is a son of Death, and deserved to die both by the

laws of this and all other well-governed realms; nor can it in our humble opinion easily be found that ever the punishment of any notorious robber was mor necessary and expedient both for the interest of justice, the security of the country, and the safety and quiet of all such as ar known to be best affected to his majestie's Government. His banishment, or offer to secur against his return, if possible, is not to be doubted, since he has had so long a haunt in his wickedness, and hath so many rascolls his followers ready to receive and fortefie him."

King William, when appealed to for a remission for Alastair, had answered that he had neither in Holland nor England pardoned a robbery or theft, and would not begin with Scotland. So Alastair was to be tried anew, only with the entreaty that the trial may be orderly and fair without exception. The justiciar-general finishes up his communication: "I was not for the remission, and I am not likely to change." So Alastair Mòr walks out of the page to the scaffold, unless he found some hole through which he could creep off, crouching like a flying hare, to his mountains again, repenting, very probably, as he ran that he had not lifted a few more head of cattle when he had the chance, while the cowards were sleeping!

Before the Forty-five, the *Book of the Dean of Lismore* comprehended the sum of the early bardic achievement, except what was floating about in the memories and hearts of the people. After its date, however, several bards of some note must be mentioned. An old poem called *The Owlet*, of sarcastic and pathetic interest, was written by a Macdonald bard, who himself being old and decrepit, had foolishly married a very young wife, who felt her husband and his dog much in her way. The bard adopts a decrepit old owl as his companion, and the poem is a dialogue between the two of them.

From the sixteenth century linger a few lines by Bishop Carswell and Sir John Stewart of Appin.

With the opening of the seventeenth century the intricate system of the bardic tradition was departed from. Mary Macleod of Skye—"Mairi nighean Alasdair Ruaidh"—was pioneer in the great change of musical and rhythmic methods. Her muse moved unfettered, yet it moved with remarkable music. She was born in 1569, and she was a hundred and five years old when she

1569-1674.

died. She is one of the most romantic figures in the sea-girt West. She nursed five chiefs of Macleod and two chiefs of Applecross. Exiled by her chief's whim to Mull, she returned only to provoke a second exile, notwithstanding which she made her famous *Cronan*, or croon, for his son. Its scheme is a kind of chain-verse, like the Psalms of degrees, or the Malay "pantoum," in which each verse swings back ere it pendulates forwards:

"I sit on a knoll,
All sorrowful and sad,
And I look on the grey sea
In mistiness clad,
And I brood on strange chances
That drifted me here,
Where Scarba and Jura
And Islay are near.

"Where Scarba and Jura
And Islay are near;
Grand land of rough mountains,
I wish thee good cheer."[1]

Iain Lom, already referred to, was bard of the Macdonald of Keppoch, and achieved revenge for the murder of his chief, who had been supplanted by his faithless cousins. The clan being apathetic, the bard went everywhere calling for revenge, till he received a commission from Government against the murderers, whom he took and beheaded. A monument of the affair abides in the well by Loch Oich, known as *Tobar nan ceann*, or the Well of the Heads, where seven heads are carved in stone, representing those of the father and six sons who were slain by the bard, carried past the place. When the Civil War broke out he flung his great influence on the side of the Stewarts, and was the rejoicing eye-witness and recorder of the defeat of Argyle by Montrose at Inverlochy on 22nd February 1645: *c.* 1620-1710.

"Did you hear from Cille Cummin
How the tide of war came pouring?
Far and wide the summons travelled,
How they drave the Whigs before them!

"From the Castle tower I viewed it
High on Sunday morning early,
Looked and saw the ordered battle
Where Clan Donald triumphed rarely.

[1] Blackie's translation.

"Up the green slope of Cuil Eachaidh
Came Clan Donald marching stoutly;
Churls who laid my home in ashes,
Now shall pay the fine devoutly! . . .

"From the height of Tom-na-harry
See them crudely heaped together,
In their eyes no hint of seeing,
Stretched to rot upon the heather! . . .

"Many a corpse upon the heather,
Naked lay, once big with daring,
From the battle's hurly-burly,
Drifting blindly to Blarchaorainn. . . .

"If I could, I would be weeping,
For your shame, and for your sorrow,
Orphans' cry and widows' wailing,
Through the long Argyll to-morrow."[1]

The power of his Jacobite songs upon the people was inextinguishable. His character is excellently depicted in Neil Munro's *John Splendid.*

Other bards were the MacVurichs of Clanranald, from a long line of bardic descent.

John Macdonald, another Clanranald bard, wrote a song which Sir Walter Scott imitated in his *Farewell to Mackenzie, High Chief of Kintail.* Hector MacLean, the bard of Duart, had a similar experience at the hands of Sir Walter in his *War Song of Lauchlan.*

Memorable also are Zachary Macaulay, from whose family sprang Lord Macaulay; and especially John MacCodrum, in connection with whom is told an interesting story of his meeting with James Macpherson, while the latter was on tour in the islands for fragments of Ossian. Macpherson, not knowing who the man was whom he met on the moor, asked him if he had anything regarding the Finn, the prehistoric heroes of the Gael; but the phrase used meant in Gaelic idiom an enquiry as to whether the Finn were due MacCodrum anything. The sarcastic genius of the poet could not resist the retort: "If they are, the vouchers are lost long ago!" Whether Macpherson deemed the man a fool, or was hurt by his laughter, he asked him no more, and the two parted, neither being aware who the other was until long afterwards. A little patience would have secured for Macpherson intercourse and help from the

1710-1796.

[1] Blackie's translation.

one man in the whole islands most eminently equipped for that purpose, who also, if he had known Macpherson's mission, would have been only proud to be of use. The greatest opportunity in Macpherson's life passed through his hands like water. The power of this poet's beauty and sweetness may be estimated, though imperfectly, from his *Mavis of Pabal*:

"The Mavis of Pabal am I; in my nest
I lay long time with my head on my breast
Dozing away the dreary hour,
In the day that was dark, and the time that was sour.

"But now I soar to the mountain's crest,
For the chief is returned whom I love best;
In the face of the sun, on the fringe of the wood,
Feeding myself with wealth of good.

"On the tip of the twigs I sit and sing,
And greet the morn on dewy wing,
And fling to the breeze my dewy note,
With no ban to my breath, and no dust in my throat.

"Every bird will praise its own nest,
And why shall not I think mine the best? . . .
A land that faces the ocean wild,
But with summer sweetness, mellow and mild, . . .
A dappled land full sunny and warm,
Secure and sheltered from the storm." [1]

The pioneer of Macpherson was Jerome Stone, a native of Fifeshire, who became rector of the Dunkeld Grammar School, and who died in his twenty-ninth year. The cause of Celtic poetry endured a great loss in his death. He was struck by the amount of floating traditional songs and poetic material around him, and in the *Scots Magazine* of January 1756 he published a poem, *The Death of Fraoch*, the first rendering from Gaelic verse to appear in print. It is not a literal translation of any fragment, but is a free version. He spoke then of the sublimity of sentiment, of the nervousness of expression, and the high spiritual metaphors of the Gaelic fragments floating on the breath of tradition, to the consideration of which he was devoting considerable attention. The relics of his industry are in Edinburgh University Library. 1727-1756.

[1] Blackie's translation.

CHAPTER XVIII

WITCHCRAFT

The superstition of witchcraft was one that long held sway over the simple mind in Scotland. An old ugly woman, fluent with imprecations of evil—perhaps, too, a little mad through want and privation—was able to dominate a whole district with terror. The superstition was strengthened through confessions wrung out of poor creatures, driven mad by torture at the hands of ministers and magistrates.

It entered into all ranks and all interests, and in church and state was a great help in clearing out of court and congregation objectionable persons, or those whom minister or king disliked. Thus, in the reign of James III. of Scotland, the Earl of Mar, brother of the king, was imprisoned in Craigmillar Castle and afterwards cruelly done to death, because the king's superstitious fears had been aroused, by the prediction of Doctor Andrews, an astrologer whom he had consulted, that he would fall by the hands of a kinsman. After Mar's murder it was given out that he had been discovered plotting with wizards and witches, using witchcraft against the king's life.

But the pitiable cruelty of such superstitions is most powerfully revealed in the trials in 1590-91, at Edinburgh, of men and women who were reputed to have dealings with the master-craftsman of evil. David Seaton, a farmer in Haddingtonshire, had suspected his servant-maid of witchcraft. So by means of excruciating torture she was forced to involve others—especially John Cunningham, schoolmaster of Prestonpans, with Agnes Sampson, midwife of Keith, Barbara Napier, and Eupheme MacCalyean, of Edinburgh, a lady of good position, wife of a prominent lawyer, and daughter of a judge of the Court of Session. Cunningham's nails were torn away, needles were thrust into his body, his legs were crushed in "the boots." What would he not have

confessed to get relief from such agonies ? Probably already half-crazed, he was driven to mad murmurings and babblings about conferences with the devil, in which mock meetings were held in the Kirk of North Berwick, when he acted as His Majesty's Session Clerk—how he had gone out with the witches to ships at sea and sunk them into disaster, and how he had chased a cat at Tranent for the purpose of throwing it into the sea to raise storms for the distress of shipping and the loss of life ! Agnes Sampson was at some of these meetings when they held wild eerie dances in the kirkyard—six men of them, and ninety-four women. What a shudder the mere thought of such convivial revelry in that place must have caused at that weird interview in the dark room of horrid torture, listening to the gasping words of a crushed and dying, crazed old creature ! Cunningham was evidently a necromancer, far ahead of the others, for he had only touched the doors with his staff and they had opened, and he " blew in " the candles with his breath. They tried to wreck the king's vessel, which was on its way home to Scotland with his Danish bride, a statement which was soberly corroborated by James himself, who said that he remembered on the voyage homeward how his ship was grievously tormented by stormy blasts and heaving seas, while the rest of the fleet was in smooth waters. But what must have been very gratifying to this monarch's unmeasured vanity—Satan had confessed to the evil crew of his associates that he could not do any harm to the king, so double-armoured was he with all the virtues that could be given by heaven to man ! The poor creatures were burned at the stake for their own madness and the black superstitious ignorance and fears of their time. James was extremely keen on this matter, having declared himself as a specialist in his *Daemonologie*, published at Edinburgh in 1597, and re-printed in London in 1603.

It is recorded in 1658 that the

" burnings of witches and warlocks were maist frequent. In Februar twa women and ane man were prisoners for this crime in the Tolbooth of Edinburgh."

One woman died in prison, but the warlock was " worryit at the stake " on the Castlehill. The other woman, Janet Anderson, who had been married only three months, confessed

that at her wedding she had given herself body and soul to Satan, and that at her wedding she had seen Satan "standing in the kirk ahint the pulpit."

In August of the same year four women were burnt at the Castlehill, all confessing the sin of witchcraft. Two months later five women belonging to Edinburgh went to the same death together, all confessing their covenant with hell, having renounced their baptism and taken from Satan new names; while only a short time later nine witches from Tranent all went the same way, with confession in their mouths.

In 1640 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland stirred up all ministers to be careful and observant in the matter of witches and charmers; and in 1649 a commission was granted to twenty-one ministers for a conference in this matter, with nine lawyers and three physicians. In 1643 the church declared the chief occasions of witchcraft to be the extremity of grief, malice, passion, and desire of revenge, pinching poverty, and solicitation of other witches. The devil's mark was to be sought for, and was proved by pricking or piercing with a bodkin, when, if it were truly Satan's stigma, it would not bleed. It was solemnly stated that the confession should have nothing in it which was impossible, yet they proceed:

"It is condescended by lawyers that the Devil may . . . having first formed to himself a body of condensed air; or that he may transport witches to their public conventions; and, upon such confessions, some have been punished as witches. . . . Witches do rarely weep, because they are ordinarily hardened. . . . Witches do likewise torment mankind by making images of clay or wax, and when they prick them, the persons do find extreme torment, which doth not proceed from any influence these images have upon the body tormented, but the Devil doth by natural means raise these torments in the person, at the very same time that the witches do prick or pounce, or hold to the fire these images."

Notable lawyers, logicians, scholars, and clergymen who had mothers, wives, and daughters of their own did not turn from such a terrible pursuit, but grew stern and cold, reading the Word of God through the gloom of a hard faith, and fancying that the murder they were sanctioning meant the saving of souls.

No rank, no position of social or intellectual distinction could save from the cruelty of the kirk and the lawyers, and the superstitious mobs of Scotland yelped at the heels of half-mad carles and carlins till they hounded them through the torture-chamber to agony, confession, and death. But it did not confine itself to the ugly, the cankered, or the old. Lady Jane Douglas, widow of John Lord Glamis, was thus accused by a disappointed lover of trying to compass the king's death by sorcery.

In two hundred and thirty years no fewer than two thousand persons met their death at the hand of this terrible fear so akin to cruelty.

In 1658 the devil was busy among the witches at Alloa, appearing as a man in brown clothes, and "ane little blak hatt." He had a simple initiation:

"'Maggie, will you be my servant?' And I said I would. Then he sayde, 'Ye must quyte God and your baptisme,' which I did; and he gave me his mark on my eyebrie by ane kiss."

How weirdly realistic does it seem to read to-day. "In the grey of the morning I conveyed him downe the bowrigg, where he vanished from me." The poor creature quoted here pays off old debts against neighbours by the devil's aid. It seems so easy! "He said to me: 'What will you have of her?' And I said: 'Her lyfe.'" So she takes the neighbours by the hand, or she gives them "a dunsh" in the back, and they never again "doe any gude." She and her company meet as cats; or, as they are going to drown a man in a water-hole when the rest are frightened off by his calling "God be merciful to me!" she follows him home at his heels in the shape of a black dog! They dance in the Cunningar, the meadows where the Communions used to be held in the olden days before all "the tables" were in the kirk; and they killed mercilessly, bairns in Tullibody, and horses and cattle all about the place. Three, at least, were burned by command of their judges, who were gentlemen of high standing, and not considered to be behind their time. The last judicial execution for witchcraft in Scotland is said to have been that of an old woman at Dornoch in 1722, for having turned her daughter into a pony and ridden her till she was lamed for life; Hugh Miller, however, mentions that he, when a boy, met an old woman

who, as a child in her mother's arms, had been present at the last burning of a witch at Tarbat Ness, and bore ineradicably in her memory the horrid recollection of a whiff of tar gas blown from the half-consumed body of the wretched victim of ignorance.[1] Yet for years afterwards many an old creature succumbed while undergoing the trial by water at the hands of fanaticism. The act abolishing the penal statutes against witchcraft was passed in 1736. Most of the enlightened ministers of the Church of Scotland had thrown their weight on the side of this movement; yet in the "Judicial Testimony" of the Secession Church this repeal of the Acts against witchcraft is mentioned with disapproval.[2]

Sauchie and Clackmannan had their witchcrafts as late as the eighteenth century. One Margaret MacArthur was up before the Clackmannan Session for uncanny dealings in an attempted cure of James Scobie. The charm was to consist in Scobie's bathing himself in silence, at dead of night, in a running stream, and having a magic powder sprinkled over him. One who was present at the incantation, and who was afterwards tried before the Session, gave a weird discription of it:

"Clackmannan, 16*th July* 1700. — John Scobie, younger, in Clackmannan, was called, who being of age thirty-eight, was sworn and interrogated if he went up with his uncle to a south-running well at Grassmainston. Deponed that he did go up with him, alone, the first night, and as his uncle was casting off his clothes at the well, the deponent saw a black man (you may guess who that was) coming from Kersemill; and when he came to the head of Robert Stupart's folds there was a great squealing among the cattle. Also when deponent had his uncle down to sprinkle him, he saw a brindled cat come out from among the corn within a little distance from him. He put magic powders upon his uncle when he was naked, which he had received from his said uncle's wife Margaret Bruce, who remarked to the deponent that the woman who directed him to go there 'would get a flee before he came back'; and that at his return, at Goldney, he heard a terrible noise as of coaches, and that he was dripping of sweat when he came into the house. The said Margaret had forbidden them to speak on going or coming, which injunction they observed. When they came to call the deponent to go the second night, he refused, till the deceased Robert Reid came and took him, and they both

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[1] *My Schools and Schoolmasters.*

[2] *See* Cunningham's *Church History of Scotland,* vol. ii. p. 230.

went with him, and saw the black man and the cat, and heard the cattle squeal as aforesaid; and, when they were coming back again, there came a great wind upon the trees on the side of the Devon; and when he was crossing Cartechy Burn his uncle's foot slipped, and he fell into the Burn. Thereupon Robert Reid said, 'The cure is lost. There is no helping of you now!' And so they spoke from thenceforth till they came home; for Margaret Bruce, the said James Scobie's wife, told them that if he fell into the water he would not be cured."

The witness further added that when they told Margaret that her husband had fallen into the water, she wept.

Each district had its weird wife to terrify it. They all had the power of raising storms at sea, and a famous one was at Tarbat, and another at Gourock, who sold wind in bottles to credulous sailors. Commonly, however, they sold a knotted string, and each knot as it was loosened liberated a breeze, but often the last one upset the ship and sailors into a damp death. The bags of wind which Ulysses got on to his craft were not an unmixed blessing either. They often, also, gave secret spells for guidance. Thus in the Norse tale the hag gives to the hero a bag of grey wool, which rolls before him, leading him to the goal of his desire.

When Sir Walter Scott visited Orkney and Shetland in August 1814, he tells in his Diary how in Stromness he saw one of the old-world weird sisterhood that dealt in this commodity.

"We clomb, by steep and dirty lanes, an eminence rising above the town, and commanding a fine view. An old hag lives in a wretched cabin on this height, and subsists by selling winds. Each captain of a merchantman, between jest and earnest gives the old woman sixpences, and she boils her kettle to procure a favourable gale. She was a miserable figure; upwards of ninety, she told us, and dried up like a mummy. A sort of clay-coloured cloak folded over her head corresponded in colour to her corpse-like complexion. Fine light-blue eyes, and nose and chin that almost met, and a ghastly expression of cunning, gave her quite the effect of Hecate. . . . We left our Pythoness, who assured us there was nothing evil in the intercession she was to make for us, but that we were only to have a fair wind through the benefit of her prayers. She repeated a sort of rigmarole which I suppose she had ready for such occasions, and seemed greatly delighted and surprised with the amount of our donation, as everybody gave her a trifle, our faithful Captain Wilson making the regular offering on behalf of the ship. So much for buying a wind."

The Cross, iron, the name of God, baptism, and fire were the only antidotes to witches and witchcrafts — running water and the shore between tidemarks the only impassable boundaries to them; till School Boards, electric lamps, and evening papers drove them far from the haunts of men, though not long since I heard in one of the Hebrides of a woman consulting the minister about her neighbour, who was in the habit of changing herself into a hare, and had been seen returning home in the dawn under that form. This was a favourite form of metamorphosis, and frequently the witches suffered considerable hurt through being pursued while in this shape, the scratches and wounds they so received abiding on them after they were themselves again. The charm they used was, according to wretched Isabel Gowdie, who suffered in 1662:

"I sall go intil a hare
With sorrow, sigh, and meikle care;
And I sall go in the devil's name;
Ay, while I come back again."

till

If, while in the shape of cats, they met any of their neighbours, they said:

"Devil speed thee,
Go thou with me!"

and immediately the others took the same shape and accompanied them. There must have been wonderful credulity both with culprit and judge in cases like these. Sir George Mackenzie said truly:

"The persons ordinarily accused of this crime are poor ignorant men, or else women, who understand not the nature of what they are accused of: and many mistake their own fears and apprehensions for witchcraft."

In some Limbo remote, unpeopled as yet, they may be holding their revels, unrecorded, to the old eldritch music of the dusky piper, whom also modern thought has banished from familiar scenes.

CHAPTER XIX

THE JACOBITE EPISODE

EXCEPT the struggle for national independence which brought upon the page of Scottish history the shining names of Bruce and Wallace, nothing has so impressed the life and poetry of Scotland as the fortunes of the ancient Stewart line. The sweetest of its voices have spoken later than the episode itself. The Jacobite minstrelsy is truly a national "emotion recollected in tranquillity." It is therefore crowned with the wondrous glamour of the sorrowful remembrance of the "Might-have-been."

A halo of romance hangs above the Stewart name. A witching pathos, like still music, follows it through sunshine and through shadow across the record. The Alanachs, or Allans, as the Gaels called them, who came into Scotland from Warwickshire as FitzAlans, gave one of their name to be the High Steward of Scotland. Then, through a marriage with the daughter of Bruce, he was called to sit upon the throne as the first Stewart. What tragedy ran through the ages from that union!

Brave and kingly though they were, yet a shadow with bloody hand haunted the Stewart race through their palaces, and did not leave any of them till they lay, watched by its weird eyes, in the gloom of sorrowful death. It is wonderful to think of them—the poet James, royal in every fibre, bringing into our rude Scotland the culture and literary refinement of Europe, stretching the mantle of his protection over the poor and oppressed, sending his strong hand with punishment in it into the remotest glens after the robber, the tyrant, and the thief, till, in the Blackfriars' Monastery of Perth, under cloud of darkness, the doors were beaten in by powerful treason, and from many a cruel gash his life's blood ran out of his brave heart. Then James II., slain by accident at the siege of Roxburgh Castle; James III., flying

in panic from the face of his angry nobles, and from the sword of his own son, stabbed by the assassin's knife in a hut at Sauchie Burn ; that son, too, dogged by remorse, wearing around his waist the iron belt which reminded him of his rebellion against his sire, till on Flodden's fatal ridge he lay among his people, when the best of Scotland fell in long red swathes in the harvest-field of death. Next in the fateful pageantry, James V., died broken-hearted over the news of his country's shame at Solway Moss ; and then that lady of romance, Mary, fairest, falsest, and most piteous of queens, whose head rolled into the executioner's basket at Fotheringay. And on till Charles, the last king born in Scotland—Charles I., who won the hearts of the cavaliers, yet, with the curse of his race upon him, had to kneel on the scaffold in front of his own palace. Still the country loved them, yearned for their returning, though they had pierced every hand stretched out to help them, though they had lied as lightly as they loved.

Especially did Scotland remain steadfastly loyal to the native lineage of kings. But when they came back in Charles II., the low, lustful ribaldries of the Stewart court sickened even those who loved them, and whose best blood had been shed for them ; while the nation could not stand the arrogance, the falsity, and cruelty of James VII., and he had to flee before the horror he had awakened in his ancient kingdom by the blindness of his religious persecutions. Yet, when he fled, and the curtain seemed to be at last run down upon the drama of the Stewarts, it only made the cavalier families, and especially the Scottish clansmen, love them the more. For it seemed so pitiful that this ancient race should be flung out of its rights and dispossessed by strangers. So there began that scheme of Jacobite intrigue which laid the foundations of the most romantic episodes in our romantic history. The baby prince, who had been carried hastily away when his father had to flee, became to the Lowlander and the Englishman James VIII., and to the Highlander "Righ Seumas."

The advent of William of Orange, though his queen was a Stewart of the blood, was most unwelcome to the Scottish Jacobites. The political verse of this time is of the poorest flat-footed kind, as may be seen from the *Coronation Song*, 1689 :

"The eleventh of April has come about,
To Westminster went the rabble rout,
In order to crown a bundle of clouts
A dainty fine king indeed.

"Descended he is from the orange tree,
But if I can read his destiny,
He'll once more descend from another tree,
A dainty fine king indeed."

and so forth, on the same level of scurrilous banality.

Graham of Claverhouse, the "Bonnie Dundee" of the Lowlanders—"Iain dubh nan cath," "Black John of the Battles," dear to the Highland heart—summoned the clans to the standard of the exiled king. The genius of Sir Walter Scott creates, as it were, almost a contemporary picture of his riding off from Edinburgh:

"To the Lords of Convention was Claver'se who spoke,
Ere the King's crown shall fall there are crowns to be broke;
So let each Cavalier who loves honour and me,
Come follow the bonnet of Bonny Dundee.

"Come fill up my cup, come fill up my can,
Come saddle your horses, and call up your men;
Come open the West Port, and let me gang free,
And its room for the bonnets of Bonny Dundee! . . .

"There are hills beyond Pentland, and lands beyond Forth,
If there's lords in the Lowlands, there's chiefs in the North;
There are wild Duniwassals three thousand times three,
Will cry *hoigh!* for the bonnet of Bonnie Dundee."

At Killiecrankie, on 17th July 1689, three thousand of his followers dashed down like a mountain torrent on five thousand of William's men under General Mackay, and sent them by the impact reeling into fell defeat. But Graham dropped mortally wounded in the moment of his triumph, and the Highland army melted away home to their mountains, leaving to James only the remembrance of a fruitless victory, and awakening some doggerel verse to commemorate the fight. Professor Aytoun, in his *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers*, spoke finer stuff in truer spirit:

"There we found him, gashed and gory,
Stretch'd upon the cumbered plain,
As he told us where to seek him,
In the thickest of the slain.

And a smile was on his visage,
For within his dying ear
Pealed the joyful note of triumph,
And the clansmen's clamorous cheer:
So, amidst the battle's thunder,
Shot, and steel, and scorching flame,
In the glory of his manhood
Passed the spirit of the Graeme!"[1]

William estranged both Highlands and Lowlands by his tacit sanction of the infamous massacre of Glencoe, with its accompaniments of basest treachery, and by his coolness in the matter of the Darien Scheme, whereby so many in southern and central Scotland were ruined financially in 1692.

When on 20th February 1702 King William's horse stumbled over a mole-hillock and precipitated the king to his death, the Jacobites exhibited in various ways their gratitude to "the little gentleman in velvet." This *Dialogue* between the Laird of Brodie and Lillias Brodie illustrates a method of plain-speaking of that time:

"*B.* Here lyes the greatest Prince e'er Europe bred;
L. Had he not James his father banished.
B. A most affectionate, and loving Prince,
L. Had not ambition thrust his uncle hence.
B. A most religious Prince, and most devout:
L. Had he not crown and mitre both thrown out . . .
B. No innocent blood in all his reign was shed,
L. Save all Glencoe in one night murdered.
B. He saved our country, and advanced our trade;
L. Witness such product we from Darien had."[2]

The union of the Crowns of Scotland and England had not by any means cemented the two nations. It had cost Scotland the pageantry of royalty, and the aroma of courtly and aristocratic society in the capital. It had shifted fashion to London, to hang about the fringe of the court, and very frequently to be contaminated by selfish ambitions and place-seeking.

The unifying possibilities of one central Parliament had deeply impressed the mind of King William, but he died ere he could carry it into reality, and it passed on into the reign of his successor, Queen Anne, as an ideal of government.

[1] *The Death-march of Dundee.*
[2] Maidment's *Scottish Pasquils.*

The union filled the minds and correspondence of the period from 1703 onwards. It dragged along slowly, for it had many obstacles to overcome. The real fight began in the Parliament at Edinburgh of June 1705, which practically adopted a uniting Act, as proposed and formulated by the Earl of Mar. The form of Treaty was finally agreed upon and signed by the Commissioners on 22nd July 1706. The affair was made an occasion of national rejoicing in England, and Mar and Loudon were created Knights of the Thistle by her majesty.

But Scotland and Scottish opinion had now to be faced, and the fight extended from October 1706 to February 1707, when the union was accomplished. The Jacobite party, the church, and the people were serious factors in the opposition. Hamilton, who led the opposition, became the darling of the mob, which waited for him and convoyed him daily with tumult of applaudings from Parliament House. The party who favoured the Treaty were, on the other hand, pursued with stones and execrations, for the people felt that their national existence was at stake. Troops were actually sent to the Border, lest their presence should be required in Edinburgh to protect the court party. Debates were prolonged sometimes till the darkness had set in, and candles had to be brought, while wordy conflicts of vituperation went on in the gloom.

The church feared lest the result of the measure should be the undoing of Presbyterianism, and a resolution of a day of national fasting was only narrowly avoided, when the pulpit might have so effectually roused the passion of the pew as to have overthrown the diplomacy of the politicians. An Act of Security was, however, passed, whereby the safety of Presbyterianism was established; although, as similar safeguards were granted to the Church of England in regard to Episcopacy, the difficulty was raised that such a measure invalidated the terms of the Solemn League and Covenant made with the southern kingdom in 1643. Rumour even ran that those who held this objection had united with the Jacobite party, that the exiled James had become a Protestant, and was prepared not only to establish the Presbyterian Church, but also to swear the Solemn League and Covenant, and come over himself to his distressed people with money and men. Fears of popular risings

spread abroad, and a party actually set out from Glasgow to march upon Edinburgh, but it dispersed at Lanark. Jacobite feeling was deeply stirred for a while, as by the conditions attached to that proposal the exiled royal house was to be excluded in favour of the Hanoverian succession.

"The Stewarts, ancient true born race,
We must now all give over.
We must receive into their place
The mungrells of Hanover."

Certain letters of the period make strange reading to-day. The Earl of Cromarty writes expressing as a New Year's hope—"and as that which I think Scotland's chief political good"—an entire union with England.

"May we be Britons, and down go the old ignominious names of Scotland, of England. Scot or Scotland are words not known in our native language.[1] England is a dishonourable name imposed on Britons by Jutland pirates and mercenaries to the Britons, usurping on their lords. Britons is our true, our honourable denomination."

The mood of the Edinburgh mob was always a thing to be seriously considered, and it was now at fever-heat. A rabble besieged Parliament House, pressing to be in, and knocked down some of the guards, so that the debate had to be postponed, for fear of tragical consequences if the mob forced the doors. When the Duke of Montrose got out they tried to stop his coach, and shouted after him blessings if he opposed the union, but curses if otherwise. When Hamilton, escorted by the cheering multitude, reached the gates of Holyrood, they were excluded by the guards, so they returned to the town, and broke the windows of ex-Provost Sir Patrick Johnston, trying to beat down his doors, and threatening to murder him "for a betrayer and seller of his country." Argyle, Lothian, and Mar, supping at Lord Loudon's, sent for the magistrates, who, though they apprehended some of the rioters, could not quell the tumult. Lord Loudon's party thought it safer to try to escape, but they were pursued with stonings and cursings to Holyrood Gate. The foot guards were called out, and took possession

[1] This is quite true. Gaelic has no knowledge of such terms, *Alban* and *Albannach* being the native words, hence the royal title *Duke of Albany*.

of the Nether Bow Gate. But the mob got a drum and beat it through the streets, insulting the very bailies.

Glasgow was little better. The Provost had to escape to Edinburgh for safety, his house having been invaded and his goods rifled and destroyed. The people of Annan, Hamilton, and Dumfries threatened to visit Edinburgh. The weather and the state of the roads, however, made this impossible. At Stirling the mob, led by the ex-treasurer of the burgh, brought out the Treaty of Union to the Town Cross and burned it, with loud huzzas. There could never have been a measure so unpopular with a nation carried through in the teeth of such clear opposition. Had an election taken place on the matter, it is certain that not a man in favour of union would have been returned. It involved skilful management, many plausible promises, and a pretty liberal expenditure of pensions and gifts under the name of arrears of money due, ere the opposition got a breach broken in it wide enough for the Treaty to pass through.

The death of Anne left the throne open to the Elector George, who lives in the lines of Jacobite satire as "the wee, wee German Lairdie." He was entirely foreign, without a word of the language of the people he was to rule over. And the spirit of Jacobitism awoke.

Scotland was embittered through the neglect of her affairs. The personality which was required to concentrate her discontent was found in John, Earl of Mar, who, by his skill as a courtier and his adroitness in adapting himself to every alteration of political circumstances, had held the favour of each political party as it came successively into power. The art of diving under difficulties and coming up safe on the other side, combined with a slight limp which he had, had won for him the title of "Bobbing John." He had been largely instrumental in carrying through the union. Snubbed at court by King George, he hastened northwards, and under the guise of a hunting expedition in the Highlands of Aberdeenshire, summoned the chiefs for a consultation. Succeeding in stirring them to the pitch of revolt, he raised the standard of the Stewarts at Castletown of Braemar on 6th September 1715. If they had only had a stronger leader with the military genius of Montrose, or the dash of Dundee, they would have set the Stewarts again on the throne; but Mar skulked behind the hills with his army, having sent off

Brigadier MacIntosh of Borlum to help the Borderers and north of England men, under Kenmure and Derwentwater, until at Sheriffmuir his army and the army of Argyle swung together in wild battle. The issue was entirely confused by the fact that the right wing of Mar crushed the left wing of Argyle, while the process was reversed in the other part of the field. It was admirably expressed in the rugged verse of the Rev. Murdoch MacLennan, minister of Crathie in Aberdeenshire, and the name of Sheriffmuir as a memorable battle passed through his ballad into the life of the Scottish people alongside of the name of Harlaw :

"There's some say that we wan,
Some say that they wan,
And some say that nane wan at a', man ;
But one thing I'm sure,
That at Sherramuir,
A battle there was, that I saw, man :
And we ran, and they ran,
And they ran, and we ran,
And we ran, and they ran awa', man. . . .

"Rob Roy there stood watch
On a hill for to catch
The booty, for aught that I saw, man,
For he ne'er advanc'd
From the place he was stanc'd,
Till no more was to do there at a', man :

"Whether we ran, or they ran,
Or we wan, or they wan,
Or if there was winning at a', man,
There no man can tell,
Save our brave Genarell,
Who first began running of a', man."

The other most notable product on the same subject is also by a clergyman, the Reverend Robert Barclay, a minister of the now forgotten Berean sect, who entitled it "*The Dialogue between William Luckladle and Thomas Cleancogue*, who were feeding their sheep upon the Ochil Hills, 13th November 1715, being the day the Battle of Sheriffmuir was fought." It was modelled on an older ballad. Its remarkable on-beat rhythm and internal rhyme uniquely suit the description of such a rough and tumble as this battle must have been.

"*W.* 'Pray came you here the fight to shun
Or keep the sheep with me, man?
Or was you at the Sheriffmuir,
And did the battle see, man?
Pray tell which of the Parties won,
For weel I wat I saw them run
Both south and north, when they begun
To pell and mell and kill and fell,
With muskets' knell and pistols' snell,
And some for hell did flee, man.'

"*T.* 'But my dear Will, I kenna still
Whilk o' the twa did lose, man;
For weel I wat they had good skill
To set upo' their foes, man.
The red coats, they are train'd, you see;
The clans always disdain to flee;
Wha then should gain the victory?
But the Highland race, all in a brace,
With a swift pace, to the Whigs' disgrace,
Did put to chace their foes, man.'"

Despite the confusion, the advantage lay with Argyle, and Mar's army retreated northward. During the retreat James VIII. himself arrived, and the disappointment was mutual. He had expected to see something other than the dejected body of clansmen depressed by the sense of futility which haunted them, and they had looked for something more heroic than this weak and uninspiring prince. At Montrose, by a mean ruse, he and Mar gave them the slip, and making for France left the brave fellows to whatever fate or luck might bring them.

On the same day as the débâcle at Sheriffmuir the Englishmen and Borderers, with the Highlanders who had gone off under Brigadier MacIntosh, had been entrapped at Preston, and taken prisoner after severe fighting. The English Jacobites were loth to rise. They were fonder of drinking healths to the king "over the water" than going out to risk head and hall in battle for his sake. Viscount Kenmure, a gallant Gordon of Galloway, and the Earl of Derwentwater, one of the most romantic, were beheaded for their share in the rising.

But the dream of restoration of the ancient line was cherished like a holy ideal in the Jacobite hearts, until in 1745 the brave and gallant son of James, the Prince Charles Edward, landing in the West Highlands, with only seven

men, "the Seven Men of Moidart," rekindled the loyalty of the Highlanders into an enthusiastic flame which carried everything before it.

Evaded by Sir John Cope, the Commander-in-Chief in Scotland, the Highland army reached Edinburgh, and took it without a blow. Cope, having returned by ship from Aberdeen, encamped at Gladsmuir, seven miles from the capital, in an apparently impregnable position. But Charles, having marched out, was led over the intervening morass by a single track, in the dark, and fell upon Cope in the dawning, inflicting such a defeat as sent him and his men into full flight from the field of battle. Cope gallops into human memory along the laughing lines of the immortal ballad of Skirving that bears his name:

"Cope sent a challenge frae Dunbar,
'Come, Charlie, meet me an ye daur,
And I'll teach you the art of war,
If you'll meet wi' me i' the morning.'
Hey, Johnnie Cope, are ye wauking yet?
Or are your drums a-beating yet?
If ye were wauking I would wait
To gang to the coals i' the morning.

"When Charlie look'd the letter upon,
He drew his sword the scabbard from,
'Come follow me, my merry, merry men,
And we'll meet Johnnie Cope i' the morning.'

"Fy, now, Johnnie, get up and rin:
The Highland bagpipes make a din,
It's best to sleep in a hale skin,
For 'twill be a bludie morning. . . .

"When Johnnie Cope to Dunbar came,
They speer'd at him, 'Where's a' your men?'
'The deil confound me gin I ken,
For I left them a' i' the morning.'

"Now, Johnnie, troth ye were na blate,
To come wi' the news o' your ain defeat,
And leave your men in sic a strait,
So early in the morning.

"'I' faith,' quo' Johnnie, 'I got a fleg,
Wi' their claymores and philabegs;
If I face them again, deil break my legs!
So I wish you a very gude morning.'"

The portrait is ineffaceable. The ballad is a grimace, irresistibly comical. Yet Cope was a brave man, helpless among the cowards whom he had to lead pell-mell away from their enemy.

Had not the Prince loitered in Edinburgh, holding court at Holyrood, instead of pushing southwards while victory fluttered above him, there is little doubt but he would have restored the crown of his fathers to their ancient line. But during his delay the tides adverse to his fortunes gathered strength, and swept back the clansman homewards in retreat from Derby, though at Clifton and at Falkirk they turned and drove the nagging foe again into defeat. Till, in April 1746, the cloud that had no lifting settled on Culloden, and the wanton murders of Cumberland thrilled the land with horror, and made "the year of revenge" a painful memory.

Yet song hath ever a large heart for failure, and it rose out of the defeat at Culloden like a seraph of light. Scottish hearts could not forget the gallant and the gay, who bore the brunt of loyalty, and tost away for their "rightful king" the lands and the honours of their fathers. The ship of the departing prince flung back upon the shores a melting wave of melody. There is no more touching cry than that which, touched by the genius of Lady Nairne, rings through the heart still.

"Bonnie Charlie's now awa'
Safely owre the friendly main;
Mony a heart will break in twa,
Should he ne'er come back again.
Will you no come back again?
Will you no come back again?
Better lo'ed you'll never be,
And will you no come back again?

"Sweet's the lav'rock's note and lang,
Lilting wildly up the glen;
And ay to me he sings ae sang,
'Will you no come back again?'"

It meant homeless ruin to many who had been faithful and true. There cannot be a more pathetic figure than the exile who speaks across the tide of memory in the directness of the ballad:

"It was a' for our rightfu' king
We left fair Scotland's strand!
It was a' for our rightfu' king
We e'er saw Irish land, my dear,
We e'er saw Irish land.

"Now a' is done that men can do,
And a' is done in vain:
To love and native land, fareweel,
For I maun cross the main, my dear,
For I maun cross the main.

"He turn'd him right an' round about,
Upon the Irish shore,
And ga'e his bridle-reins a shake,
With, 'Adieu, for evermore, my dear,'
With, 'Adieu for evermore.'

"The sodger frae the wars returns,
The sailor frae the main;
But I hae parted frae my love,
Never to meet again, my dear,
Never to meet again.

"When day is gane, an' night is come,
An' a' folk bound to sleep,
I think on him that's far awa,
The lee-lang night, an' weep, my dear,
The lee-lang night, an' weep."

Allan Cunningham's exquisite picture is extremely true to the spirit of the Jacobite regret:

"Hame, hame, hame, hame fain wad I be,
O hame, hame, hame, to my ain countrie!
There's an eye that ever weeps, and a fair face will be fain,
As I pass through Annan Water with my bonnie bands again.
When the flower is in the bud, and the leaf upon the tree,
The lark shall sing me hame in my ain countrie."

One can see the light in the window, and hear the splash of the horseman riding the dark water, home!

Through the memory of the whole episode runs a babbling stream of truly Scottish music; while the very air is vocal of regret, as in the spirit of William Glen's sweet song:

"A wee bird came to our ha' door,
He warbled sweet and clearly,
And aye the o'ercome o' his sang
Was 'Wae's me for Prince Charlie!'"

It took a long time ere the hope of the Jacobites died, and in many a heart such a belief as this held true:

"I may sit in my wee croo house,
At the rock and the reel to toil fu' dreary;
I may think on the day that's gane,
And sigh and sab till I grow weary.

"I ne'er could brook, I ne'er could brook,
A foreign loon to own or flatter;
But I will sing a ranting sang,
That day our king comes ower the water. . . .

"My father was a good lord's son,
My mother was an earl's daughter,
And I'll be Lady Keith again,
That day our king comes ower the water."

Through the whole episode runs as rich a golden thread of devoted fealty and truth as ever beautified the story of any nation upon earth. In the poorest land in Europe, among as poor people as could be found anywhere, this ruined prince, this helpless man, tattered and in despair, with a fortune of sixty thousand pounds upon his head, was watched and guarded, nourished and guided for five long months, through lines of sentinels, through the midst of his enemies, till he reached a haven of safety in France. The devotion of the people forms a fitting background to the courage of Flora Macdonald, who aided him in his escape, sharing with him blamelessly the hardships that fell to his lot. The hopelessness of his fortunes in later days drove him into a life of sordid drunkenness. The end of an old song, with a dying fall! Yet surely memory would bring to him often the old grand days of brave and fearless battle-marching, and the devotion of the men who gave their lives for him. Eugene Lee Hamilton, in his fine sonnet, expresses this with most touching truth, worth twenty such studies in hysteria as Aytoun's *Charles Edward at Versailles on the Anniversary of Culloden:*

"Hark, hark! I hear above the trees that sigh,
A sound of Highland music, wild and sweet,
Like gusts from Falkirk, gusts of victory!
My heart contracts, and doubles in its beat
I shiver in the sun, I know not why—
'Twas but the Roman pipers in the street!"

The most important result of the Fifteen, as bearing upon the fortune of the country, was the interlacing of the Highlands with roads through the genius of General Wade. Over the steepest heights, and through the wildest glens, those paths for the feet of Saxon justice forced their way, binding to Edinburgh and London the remote strongholds behind the mountain lines. Their traces may be seen to-day, and

still awake admiration of the indomitable patience that, in face of stupendous difficulties, led them everywhere.

Another great result was the raising of the Independent Companies, as they were called—bodies of Highlanders, in Government pay, who acted on the Highland border as a kind of military police against blackmail and cattle-plunder. The most famous of these became the renowned Black Watch, raised at Aberfeldy in the year 1740.

After the Forty-five, the foresight of Pitt, afterwards Earl of Chatham, created, amid protest and not even without risk, the famous Highland regiments, who fought in the great struggles against France, winning splendid distinctions for Britain in these and in every subsequent campaign. The Gordons, the Seaforths, the Camerons, still maintain the reputations won by those before them, who made the tartan feared on every field. Pitt said with great truth:

"I have sought for merit wherever it could be found. It is my boast that I was the first Minister who looked for it, and found it in the mountains of the north. I called it forth, and drew into your service a hardy and intrepid race of men; men who, when left by your jealousy, became a prey to the artifices of your enemies, and had gone nigh to have overturned the State in the war before last. These men in the last war were brought to combat on your side; they served with fidelity, as they fought with valour in every quarter of the globe."

CHAPTER XX

REHABILITATION OF THE MAKKARS

It was very remarkable how the old masters of Scottish poesy were by this time enveloped in a haze of forgottenness. We saw how the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Union of the Crowns affected the language in which Scottish poets wrote. It is difficult clearly to apportion, in the work of Alexander Scott and Alexander Montgomerie, what belongs to England, to Italy, and to France. King James himself saw how the poets of the Petrarchan order were turning away from them that "wrait of auld," for he said:

"lyke as the tyme is changit sensyne, sa is the ordour of Poesie changit."

It was believed that by his time poetry had arrived at "mannis age and perfection," whereas in the earlier days "it was bot in the infancie and chyldheid." It required but a very little ere the curtain was dropped over Henryson and Dunbar, next over Scott and Montgomerie themselves, and then such poets as wrote at all took to English, following approved models.

The rehabilitation of the ancient bards was achieved through a gradual process. Bale, in his attempt to catalogue the literature of Great Britain, turned his attention to Scotland while Lyndsay was alive. On the voyage thither he was captured by pirates. He contented himself with the results of Major, Polydore Vergil, Hector Boece, Nicholas Brigham, and others. Brigham sent him Dunbar's name, but in view of the lack of information, it was omitted from the printed catalogue, which, however, included James I., Blind Harry, Douglas, Bellenden, and Lyndsay. Later labourers in the same field accepted Bale's results and used the histories of Leslie and Buchanan. They followed each

other like sheep through a gap in a fence; but Dempster took the trouble to add not only some names, but to append epithets to these, including:

"Alexander Humaeus, . . . Patric. Humaeus Polvvartus dictus Scoticus Pindarus 1612. . . . Alex. Montgomeri Homerus Scoticus 1591. Semple aut Simplicius, Scoticus Flaccus, 1594."

Barbour and Blind Harry, with Lyndsay, and *The Cherrie and the Slae* of Montgomerie, were, of course, in the homes and on the lips of the people till the end of the eighteenth century, thus representing, as popular classics, patriotism, morality, and allegory. Leyden in 1801 asserted that many shepherds could repeat these works, and Professor Minto in 1874 remembered a wandering beggar who was able to recite the *Wallace*—of course, in Gilbertfield's version; though Patrick Gordon, who wrote his rhyming *Historie of Robert the Bruce*, published at Dordrecht in 1615, said regarding Barbour's work:

"The old printed book, besydes the outworne barborous speiches, was so evill composed that I culd bring it to no good method."

Henry Charteris printed editions of these, along with Douglas's *Palice of Honour* and Henryson's *Fables* and *The Testament of Cresseid*. In this work he was succeeded by Andro Hart. Douglas appeared again when the *Aeneid* was printed in 1710. Henryson's *Cresseid*, however, was customarily printed along with Chaucer's works, as being the production of the English poet, while Henryson was overlooked. Indeed, except for a reference or two, Henryson and Dunbar were quite forgotten. Douglas held his own, and was universally praised by scholars. Drummond of Hawthornden, Spottiswoode, and Calderwood, along with the Englishmen Speght and Kynaston, all spoke of him with the highest respect, the last-named calling him "the most famous of the Scottish poets." Hume of Godscroft said of him:

"In his Prologues before every Book where he hath his libertie, he sheweth a naturall and ample vein of poesie, so pure, pleasant and judicious, that I believe there is none that hath written before or since, but cometh short of him. And in my opinion, there is not such a piece to be found as is his Prologue to the Eight Book . . . at least in our language."

The real revival of the Scottish masters, however, arose out of a widely felt renewal of interest in old English, and in the written language generally. William L'isle printed in 1623 *A Saxon Treatise concerning the Old and New Testament*, which was attributed to Aelfric. In his preface he tells how he came to read Gawain Douglas. The passage is worth transcribing:

"The due consideration hereof first stirred vp in me an earnest desire to know what learning lay hid in this old English tongue: for which I found out this vneasie way, first to acquaint my selfe a little with the Dutch both high and low; the one by originall, the other by commerce allied; then to reade a while for recreation all the old English I could finde, poetrie or prose, of what matter soever. And divers good bookes of this kinde I got, that were never yet published in print; which ever the more ancient they were, I perceived came nearer the Saxon. But the Saxon (as a bird flying in the aire farther and farther, seemes lesse and lesse); the older it was, became harder to bee vnderstood.

"At length I lighted on Virgil Scotished by the Reverend *Gawin Douglas*, Bishop of *Dunkell*, and vncle to the Earle of *Angus*; the best translation of that Poet that ever I read: and though I found that dialect more hard than any of the former (as nearer the Saxon, because farther from the Norman), yet with helpe of the Latine, I made shift to vnderstand it, and read the booke more than once from the beginning to the end."

Franciscus Junius, in his Anglo-Saxon studies, also used Douglas as an aid to the expiscation of ancient literature.

In 1691 Gibson, afterwards Bishop of Lincoln, published an interestingly curious edition of the macaronic *Polemo-Middinia*, attributed to Drummond of Hawthornden, along with *Christ's Kirk on the Green*, as a "sort of exercise towards a knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon." He illustrated these poems with copious notes, showing the relationship of words in Icelandic, and other northern dialects, and, treating Gawain Douglas for the first time as a classic, quoted from him and Chaucer. Following in the steps of Dr George Hickes's *Thesaurum Linguarum Veterum Septentrionalium*, and *Grammar of Anglo-Saxon and Mœso-Gothic*, Bishop Nicholson dealt with Blind Harry and Barbour, and lifted Wyntoun out of blank obscurity; while Bishop Tanner took up *The Kingis Quair*, and touched Dunbar with re-awakening. Then Allan Ramsay, Ruddiman, and Sage began their labours; the mists were dissipated, and the men of old

stepped out into the modern world. The treasure-houses in which lay the works of the erstwhile forgotten were ransacked by loving hands—especially the Bannatyne manuscript, now in the Advocates' Library. Later workers used the Asloan, the Maitland, the Reidpath, and the Makculloch manuscripts, with the printed editions of the early Scottish press, and odds and ends everywhere.

Exceedingly important for the fate of Scottish poetry were the three volumes issued by James Watson, Edinburgh, in 1706, 1709, and 1711, under the title of a *Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems both Ancient and Modern.* It was a most miscellaneous gathering, covering every kind of production from folk-poetry up to the effusions of notable poets. It showed that people were interested in the poetry of their own country to the extent of buying it, but it further became a quickening influence, holding out to verse-writers models of composition. It included Montgomerie's *The Cherrie and the Slae*, *Christis Kirk on the Grene*, *The Piper of Kilbarchan*, *The Dying Words of Bonnie Heck*, and *Halloo my Fancie!* This work especially helped to awaken the mind of Allan Ramsay to his life-work. It revealed to him the material on which a Scottish poet might suitably exercise his wit.

" Gentle Allan " was a native of Leadhills in Lanarkshire. Too much has been made of his reference to the Ramsays of Dalhousie :

1686-1758.

> " Dalhousie of an auld descent,
> My chief, my stoup, and ornament."

In Scotland, through the clan system, every man looked upon himself as kin to the chief of his name. " I am of the Glenorchy Campbells," or " I am of the Menteith Grahams," may imply, on the lips of an old servant-maid, no claim to relationship with the chief, of later date than the Flood. It simply means that her people were of that " sept " or section of the race or clan. At the same time, there was some ground for the poet's vaunt, for Allan's great-grandfather was Captain John Ramsay, son of Ramsay of Cockpen, who was brother of Ramsay of Dalhousie. Not that such a thing mattered very much, if at all, in his case, except when his detractors sneered at him as having risen out of nothing to a position and a competency higher and better than his blood and origin seemed to justify.

His mother's second marriage thrust Ramsay out into the world under poorest circumstances. Apprenticed to an Edinburgh wig-maker, he, through his industry, made a success of his life, and became a book-seller. His attainments are hardly to be called the fruit of inspiration so much as the result of clear vision, neat utterance, and perseverance, guided by common-sense and a knowledge of what the public wanted. For example, he says:

> "If happily you gain them to your side,
> Then bauldly mount your Pegasus and ride,
> Value yourself what only they desire,
> What does not take, commit it to the fire."

Prompted by the habit of the "Easy Club," which was frequented by Pitcairne, Abercrombie, and Ruddiman, he began to practise writing topical verse. He then found that people would buy his productions, so he published them in sheets, which were eagerly snatched up. Although he had read as well as his self-taught mind could read the best of English poetry in his own day, his acquaintance with the masterpieces of Scottish poetry came only when he discovered the treasury hid in the pages of the Bannatyne manuscript. He next, in 1716, printed from that valuable source *Christ's Kirk on the Green*, adding to it a canto written by himself. Two years afterwards he re-issued this with a third canto. The encouragement he received prompted him to give to the world a volume of his own, three years later, an enterprise which put four hundred guineas into his pocket. His editorial labours were again exercised in perhaps his most important work, which he called *The Tea-Table Miscellany*, the first volume of which was issued by him in 1724, the same year in which he published *The Evergreen*, "a collection of Scots poems written by the ingenious before 1600." The bulk of this latter work was taken from the Bannatyne manuscript. Ramsay had neither the scholarship nor the critical ability to do these things justice, but it met the necessity of the time, and saved from oblivion many of the best compositions in Scottish poetry, introducing these indeed to a generation which knew nothing whatever about them.

The Tea-Table Miscellany extended to four volumes, the last of which was published in 1740. Amongst the "ingenious young gentlemen" who helped Ramsay in his

book were David Mallet, William Hamilton of Bangour, his namesake of Gilbertfield, and Robert Crawford. It was as varied in its ingredients as Scotch broth, for it contained songs of his own and of his friends, along with many that were really old, and many fragments which had been touched up by himself or others. He, however, did not give any information as to authorship, age, or source. Nevertheless, it was of great service, for it preserved what might otherwise have disappeared, it prompted many new creations, and it suggested enterprise in similar fields to other collectors. But, above all, his work in these lines was of great benefit to Ramsay. He did not dare to reproduce in his imitations the splendour of the "aureate phrases" of the old poets, but had, in his Scottish verse, to be himself, using his own vocabulary, native to his time, while in his English compositions he followed the model of Pope. Many of his imitations were extremely banal, as, for example, that which he based on Sir Robert Aytoun's lines:

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
Tho' they return with scars?
These are the noble hero's lot,
Obtained in glorious wars;
Welcome, my Varo, to my breast,
Thy arms about me twine,
And make me once again as blest
As I was lang syne."

How the genius of Burns takes out of one's mouth the taste of brick and leather left by such a thing as that!

It is natural, when one remembers the inspirations of the time in which Ramsay lived, to expect to find in the *Miscellany* Damon, Delia, and Chloe, and the humbug of bunkum shepherds and shepherdesses, such as moved so much through the pinchbeck pastoralism of the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, his philosophy is practical, Epicurean, and sound, as in this:

"Be sure ye dinna quit the grip
Of ilka joy, when ye are young,
Before auld age your vitals nip,
And lay ye twa-fold o'er a rung."

The last line is old age in an epigram.

His *Familiar Epistles* between him and Hamilton of Gilbertfield were extremely suggestive of form to Burns;

but he rises above himself immeasurably in his great work *The Gentle Shepherd*, which appeared in 1725. Ramsay found its title in the *Aegloga Duodecima* of Spenser's *Shepheard's Calender*, which begins :

> "The gentle Shepheard satte besyde a springe,
> All in the shadowe of a bushye brere."

It was practically made up of two eclogues, *Patie and Roger*, and *Jennie and Maggie*, which appeared in 1723. Its construction lifts it out of the purely artificial pastoral, which, in times of poetical decadence in all nations, found vogue, especially amongst dwellers in towns. In Ramsay the characters among the sheep-folds cease to be mantel-piece decorations. The remembrance of the hills and glens of his native Lanarkshire saved him from that, and one feels, in the scenes in the peasant homes, that one is in Scotland and not in Arcadia, and that, when the sneck is lifted and the door opened, we are led in by one who knew the life and the people in country places, and had himself shared the joys and sorrows of the poor. The story itself is, of course, quite flimsy. The gentleman-shepherd and the lady-shepherdess incognito are a bit of poetic conventionality, but there is nothing else against which this charge can be levelled. The atmosphere of those who are

> "contented wi' little, and canty wi' mair"

pervades the poem. There is humour and sympathetic truth ; both his seriousness and his fun are spontaneous. It appealed to the people, and its appeal hit the mark it sought. Above all, like the rest of his poems, it shows his convincing views of life, and his sound knowledge of the human heart. It had great influence in turning men to Nature.

His *Vision*, which he published in *The Evergreen*, as being ancient—which it evidently was not, for he had not the scholarship which would have enabled him successfully to create an antique—attaches itself to the Scottish struggle for independence against English Edward. He pretended, in a note, that it had been written in Latin in 1300, and translated in 1524. In a dream he has an interview with the Warden of Scotland, who speaks plain truths about the peers that sold the liberty of their nation ; but it is perfectly

clear that the poem really expressed Ramsay's Jacobite sentiments and his opinion of the results of the Union of the Parliaments. Such visions were the privilege of the Scottish poets from the first, but one cannot help thinking how exquisitely natural is Burns's interview with Coila, who, while he is brooding in his hovel, lifts the latch and enters with her message into the poet's wide-awake consciousness. The directness of a true poet's intercourse with the eternal makes all the difference between the breeze on Ben Ledi and the draught from a kitchen door. As has been often pointed out, there was a mischievous imp which seemed to sit on Ramsay's shoulder and to leap down amongst his serious verse at the most inopportune moment, scattering solemn thought and preventing him writing truly great poetry ; but, apart from that, he never had the genius for such, and we must not ask from him what he could not give. It was enough that he recalled the spirit of Scottish poetry from the brink of the grave into which it was walking in its sleep. He is a Scottish Horace, a townsman by upbringing and custom, yet with a window in his heart through which he looks occasionally to rural scenes and circumstances.

His description of himself, for example, is quite in the spirit of Flaccus :

> "Imprimis, then, for tallness, I
> Am five foot and four inches high ;
> A black-a-vic'd, snod, dapper fallow,
> Nor lean, nor overlaid with tallow."

He loved town comforts, fraternal convivialities with friends, the door shut, business and storm excluded, the lamp on the table, and the blood-red claret in front of him—a simple corroboration of the somewhat forgotten fact that whisky as a general drink is more modern than his day.

> "See that shining glass of claret,
> How invitingly it looks.
> Take it aff, and let's have mair o't,
> Pox on fighting, trade, and books.
>
> Let's have pleasure, while we're able,
> Bring us in the meikle bowl,
> Place't on middle of the table,
> And let wind and weather growl."

There is a characteristic touch in these lines reflective of the life of the people :

> "Now the sun's gane out o' sight,
> Beet the ingle, and snuff the light ;
> In glens the fairies skip and dance,
> And witches wallop over to France."

In him the native pastoral spirit of Scotland emerged to new vigour in all its natural strength, its humorous colloquy, its native artlessness, streaming with tenderness and sympathy. "Gentle Allan" was an embodiment of all that was delightful in Scottish life and people, free from austerity and gloom. A great change had come over Scottish habits. It was a time of club and tavern life, where genius was readily acknowledged and recognised, and Ramsay was immediately welcomed for his inborn Scottish pawkiness, his terse power of description, his unique glimpses of Scottish life. In his own lines we get, at any rate, an insight into the life of the children of the Scottish peasantry, who were compelled, as he was himself :

> "To wade through glens, wi' chorking feet,
> When neither plaid nor kilt could fend the weet ;
> Yet blithely wad he bang oot ower the brae,
> Hoping the morn might prove a better day."

The last especially gives the keynote to that characteristic which makes the Scot so successful as a colonist.

It needed Burns to breathe into the Scottish verse true dignity, grace, beauty, and simplicity ; yet to Ramsay we owe such delightful lilts as *The Last Time I cam' ower the Muir*, and *The Yellow-haired Laddie*. Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd* is the truest pastoral poem that any poet ever gave the world. It reflects with perfect veracity, a simple, unaffected, inartificial rustic life among the hills, with herds and flocks. It contains real swains, who live in their daily vocation amid homely scenes, which are true to the nature from which they are painted.

It is delightful for us to-day to remember that by his literary work, which was patriotic at the root of it, he was enabled to live in ease, and to know that he had done a great thing for the sake of his native land and literature. But how delighted would he have been had he known that his work made it possible for Scotland to have given to it

the flaming utterance of the genius of Burns, through whose tingling verse the spirit of his native land could never die.

He vindicated native poetry and the right to smile in Scotland.

In his book-selling shop near St Giles he opened a circulating library, the first of its kind in our country. Visitors of distinction called upon him there, including the poet Gay, somewhat akin in spirit to himself. Ramsay's bent as a book-seller was revealed somewhat by his sign, which was the heads of Ben Jonson and Drummond of Hawthornden. He ventured upon a speculation in a theatre in Carrubber's Close, which was closed by order of the magistrates; but Ramsay had made what lifted him above the risks and cares of advancing age, so he shrugged his shoulders and built himself a comfortable house on the Castle Hill of Edinburgh. When he died in 1758 his dust was laid in Greyfriars Churchyard, where the dust of the best is sleeping.

That Ramsay was no greater than he was, cannot be laid against him for blame. There was a big gulf of silence between him and the head of inspiration in Scotland's past. The tide had ebbed far along the shore of Scottish poetry, and Ramsay had to re-launch the ship. He had neither skill nor opportunity to venture out on the great deep, but he kept the flag flying till the commodore came on board. He, in verse, was an amateur antiquary, searching for "auld words" as one searches for old brooches, and fastening together the woof of his Scottish verse picturesquely with these. In fact, the best of his songs are threaded upon or suggested by the minstrelsy before his own day. His weakest work is when he writes in English, where the worst affectations of his models, with their gods and goddesses, spoiled the spontaneity of his verse.

That his fame was not quite local is proved by the fact that an edition of his poems appeared in London and another in Dublin during his lifetime in 1731 and 1733.

With Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd* is associated Alexander Ross's *Helenore, or the Fortunate Shepherdess*, a pastoral of the Grampian fringe. Ross was born at Kincardine O'Neil on Deeside, and became schoolmaster of Lochlee in the Highlands of Forfarshire. In remote seclusion with the simplest and most ancient primitiveness of life

1699-1784.

surrounding him, he observed with tenderness, and recorded his impressions with considerable art. His verse is in spirited northern Doric, pithy, natural, muscular. The work was published when the poet was seventy years of age.

This pastoral held a long popularity, and won for the remote singer the friendship of great names. It was, of course, suggested by the *Gentle Shepherd*, but it has a power and meaning of its own. The truth of description and vivid reality of the reflection of the life of the people are quite unique. The most unfortunate blemish comes through the influence of the artificial pastoral of the time, which impelled Ross to give, instead of native names, nomenclatures like Daphne, Rosalind, and Olimond to his characters. Rosalind, despite Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, is, with Ross, the swain, and not the maid. The poet's familiarity with proverbial phrase makes *Helenore* vibrant with pith and direct sense. His two thousand lines run as steadily and clearly as the burn ran down the glen. There is in him, at any rate, no touch of the consciously artificial Doric. His dialect is living, simple, strong, and spontaneous ; he wrote the thing he knew, and that is the secret of real mastery. Only to those ignorant of the peasant life can *Helenore* seem dreary and dull.

With other things, he left *Woo'd an' Married an' a'*, and *The Rock and the Wee Pickle Tow*, the humour of which it is difficult to surpass. It was surely a harvest not to be ashamed of which gave to north and south, for one generation's gathering, Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd* and Ross's *Helenore*.

Amongst those who helped Ramsay in his *Tea-Table Miscellany* was William Hamilton of Bangour, sometimes confused with Hamilton of Gilbertfield. He was a man of considerable culture, and good social position, but he involved himself with the Jacobite rising in 1745. He wrote an *Ode on the Victory of Prestonpans*, and, after Culloden, shared hiding places with the famous John Roy Stewart. 1704-1754.

He had to take refuge abroad until 1749, when he returned, having been duly pardoned. In 1750 he succeeded to the estate of Bangour in Ayrshire, but had to go abroad in ill-health, and died at Lyons in 1754. He is buried in the Chapel Royal in Holyrood. A volume of his *Poems on Several Occasions*, issued in 1748, though without consulta-

tion with the author, had the honour of a preface by Adam Smith. Several editions have been subsequently published. Hamilton followed the vogue of his contemporaries, and had written several imitations and versions of Homer, Virgil, and Horace. He also attempted a mock-heroic poem, *The Maid of Gallowshiels*, which was to have covered twelve books, but very fortunately he got no further than seven hundred lines of it. His occasional verse shows a tendency to imitate Pope, Milton, and Dryden; but there is a lack of original feeling in his work. He polishes other men's brasses too obviously. His chief claim to remembrance is his ballad, *The Braes of Yarrow*, which is hung on to a beautiful old verse, used by Allan Ramsay in a song in Johnson's *Musical Museum*. Very little in modern poetry conveys more intensely the spirit of ballad times.

"'Where got ye that bonnie, bonnie bride?
Where got ye that winsome marrow?'
'I got her where I durst not well be seen—
Pu'ing the birks on the braes of Yarrow.' . . .

"'Why does she weep, thy bonnie, bonnie bride?
Why does she weep, thy winsome marrow?
And why dare ye nae mair weel be seen
Pu'ing the birks on the braes of Yarrow?'

"'Lang maun she weep, lang maun she, maun she weep,
Lang maun she weep, with dule and sorrow;
And lang maun I nae mair weel be seen
Pu'ing the birks on the braes of Yarrow.

"'For she has tint her lover, lover dear—
Her lover dear, the cause of sorrow;
And I have slain the comeliest swain
That e'er pu'ed birks on the braes of Yarrow.'"

However beautifully, in many of the lines, he caught the trick of repetition, in some of them the result is disastrous; and a little self-denying criticism on the part of the author would have enriched the product. For example, it is difficult to parallel the crudity of such verses as the following:

"And why yon melancholious weeds
Hang on the bonnie birks of Yarrow."

or

"What can my barbarous barbarous father do?"

or

"My happy sisters may be, may be proud—
With cruel and ungentle scoffin'
May bid me seek, on Yarrow's braes,
My lover nailed in his coffin."

Nevertheless, as Sir George Douglas points out, it is some distinction that it "served as a source of inspiration to Wordsworth," and it certainly accentuates the pathetic interest which hangs like a romantic atmosphere above the melancholy Border stream.

When Hamilton of Bangour died the *Caledonian Mercury* expressed the opinion that he was, in language, sentiments, and principles, "a poet, little, if at all, inferior to Dryden, Addison, and Pope." The *Mercury* was a little too high at that time, and the critic of a later day would be more sober in his estimate.

Lord Yester, who took an active part in the unrest over measures about the Union of the Parliaments, remains in the annals of Scottish poetry through his one song *Tweedside.* 1646-1713.

"When Maggie and I were acquaint
I carried my noddle fu' hie;
Nae lintwhite on a' the green plain,
Nae gowdspink sae happy as me.
But I saw her sae fair, and I lo'ed,
I wooed, but I cam' nae great speed;
So now I maun wander abroad,
And lay my banes far frae the Tweed."

Professor Veitch calls it "the earliest remaining Tweeddale song." The melody to which it is sung has been attributed, though without any real reason, to David Rizzio. The song was used in Gay's opera of *Polly* in 1729.

The same topic speaks through Robert Crawford, who was also one of those who assisted Ramsay in *The Tea-Table Miscellany.* He was of a good family, his father being proprietor of Drumsoy in Renfrewshire. His brother Thomas was in the diplomatic staff of the Scottish court, and Robert himself lived some years in France. One of his best-known sets of verses bears the same title as 1695-1732.

Lord Yester's, and was probably written to the same melody :

> "What beauties does Flora disclose !
> How sweet are her smiles upon Tweed !
> Yet Mary's, still sweetest than those,
> Both nature and fancy exceed. . . .
> The warblers are heard in the grove,
> The linnet, the lark, and the thrush ;
> The blackbird and sweet cooing dove
> With music enchant every bush."

Most notable, in name at least, is his *Bush abune Traquair*, which has been written deeply in the tender remembrance of Scottish hearts by the later poem with the same title by Principal Shairp. Crawford's poem is, however, merely a conventional creation. The song that is most frequently associated with his name is *Doun the Burn, Davie*, though the version which is sung to-day was with very great advantage improved by Burns.

William Hamilton of Gilbertfield, often confused with Hamilton of Bangour, abides through the sanction of his paraphrase of Blind Harry's *Wallace*. Like all revised versions, it has its deficiencies ; nevertheless, it took a firm hold on the Scottish people for almost two hundred years. Hamilton's version fills over two hundred pages and twelve books, even after a frequently drastic summarizing of his original. His motive was twofold—to restore a hero to his proper place in the nation's heart, and to set before the nation an inspiring model of patriotic virtues. That the nation rose to the bait is proved by the fact that the work ran through thirteen editions. That its clay was not without an occasional nugget is shown by the lines : 1665-1751.

> "A false usurper falls in every foe,
> And liberty returns with every blow."

No Scotsman needs to be told in what heart that found a responsive chord, nor where, quivering like a well-thrown spear, it abides embedded for ever. Gilbertfield had served in the army, but preferred the life of a country gentleman. His other notable poem is *The Last Dying Words of Bonnie Heck*, which appeared in *Watson's Choice Collection* in 1706,

and which gave the suggestion to Burns of his *Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie*. *Bonnie Heck* was a famous greyhound in "the shire of Fife," but, being "cripple, auld, and lame," was now going to be hanged, so he gives himself a dying testimonial, which probably might have been forgotten had it not ricocheted, and, striking the greater bard of a later day, stirred his genius to emulation. The poetical epistles which passed between Hamilton and Allan Ramsay fixed the "*Habbie Simson*" verse as the model for what became in the eighteenth century a favourite amusement with Scottish writers. It was followed by Burns, and it was a pleasant advance in its methods, spirit, and vocabulary on those of *The Flyting* of Dunbar and Kennedy, and of Polwart and Montgomerie.

Dr John Arbuthnot, who was a Kincardineshire man, but studied at Aberdeen, and took his degree at St Andrews, settled down in London, where he taught mathematics. Happening, however, to be at Epsom when the Prince of Wales was seized with sudden illness, he prescribed for the royal patient so successfully that he received the appointment of physician to him, a stepping-stone to being finally physician to the queen. He secured the friendship of Pope and Swift, and became a noted London wit in the reigns of Anne and the first two Georges. He contributed to the *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*, and he originated, in his *History of John Bull*, the long-established epithet for England, so aptly interpreted by *Punch* in a later day. The titles of his satires sufficiently explain them. At least one of them, *The Art of Political Lying*, might have been written by Swift

1667-1735.

Sir John Clerk, of Penicuik, one of the commissioners in the negotiations for union, figured in Edinburgh society as a wit and patron of wits. Allan Ramsay partook of his hospitality every year at his comfortable country-house. He wrote to an old strain *Merry may the Maid be*, a true bit of the vernacular, and worthy of the friend of "Gentle Allan."

1680-1755.

"Merry may the maid be
That marries the miller;
For, foul day and fair day,
He's aye bringing till her,--

Has aye a penny in his purse,
For dinner and for supper;
And, gin she please, a good fat cheese
And lumps of yellow butter.

"In winter when the wind and rain
Blaws o'er the house and byre,
He sits beside a clean hearth-stane
Before a rousing fire;
With nut-brown ale he tells his tale,
Which rows him o'er fu' nappy;
Who'd be a king—a petty thing,
When a miller lives so happy?"

It was alleged by Ramsay's detractors that Sir John Clerk helped him to write *The Gentle Shepherd*; but, as Lord Hailes said, they who hinted at such a collaboration or even more, should prove first that the poet's friends could write such a pastoral. It is perhaps truer that Ramsay was more likely to write the play than that any other of his day should be able to do it for him.

Two contemporaries of Ramsay, of whom little is known, were the Pennecuiks, frequently confused with one another.

A volume of miscellaneous poems entitled *A Collection of Scots Poems on Several Occasions by the late Mr Alexander Pennecuik and others*, appeared in 1756 in Edinburgh, and was reprinted in Glasgow in 1787. It included some poems by Ramsay, whose style and whose topics were clearly reproduced in Pennecuik's verse. Pennecuik died in poverty, and his dust lies in Greyfriars Churchyard. His lines are full of pith and verve, but are frequently extremely bitter in invective against whatsoever or whomsoever he dislikes. His satire on *The Stool of Repentance*, with his *Elegy on Robert Forbes*, and *The Mery Wives of Muselburgh*, in their welcome to Maggie Dickson, a fish-wife of that town, who by a fortunate accident defeated the hangman, though she was flung from the ladder, are full of the broad, outspoken humour of the gutter and "plainstones" life of the Edinburgh of his day. Impudent wit, not particular of what it throws, or from what puddle it is lifted, so long as it hit the mark, are his distinguishing qualities. He is the laureate of the close-mouth and street. He was an acknowledged rival of "Gentle Allan" for popular

d. 1730.

favour. That his rivalry was deliberate is quite apparent from the following table:—

By Ramsay.	*By Pennecuik.*
Elegy on John Cupar, Kirk-Treasurer's Man, 1714.	Elegy on Robert Forbes, Kirk-Treasurer's Man.
The Last Speech of a Wretched Miser.	The Picture of a Miser; written of George Herriot's Anniversary, 3rd June 1728.
On the Royal Company of Archers Marching, etc. 4th August 1724.	Panegyric on the Noble Company of Bowmen, etc., 11th May 1726.
The Nuptials, a Masque, on the Marriage of His Grace James, Duke of Hamilton and Brandon, etc.	A Pastoral on the Nuptials of His Grace James, Duke of Hamilton, etc., with the Lady Ann Cochran, daughter of the Right Hon. John, Earl of Dundonald; solemnised 14th February 1723.
An Ode Sacred to the Memory of Ann, Duchess of Hamilton.	The Heavenly Vision; sacred to the Memory of Ann, Duchess of Hamilton.
Prologue spoken by Mr Anthony Aston the First Night he acted in Winter 1726.	Prologue to the *Beggars' Opera*, when first acted in the Tennis-court at Holyrood House, 1728.

He out-Ramsayed Ramsay in his broadest strength. *Streams from Helicon* and *Flowers of Parnassus* came from his pen in 1720 and 1726 respectively.

Alexander Pennecuik, M.D., of Newhall and Romanno, cannot be said to be remembered, but he published *A Geographical and Historical Description of the Shire of Tweeddale, with a Miscellany and Curious Collection of Select Scottish Poems*, in 1715. The poems were afterwards in 1762 published as *A Collection of Curious Scottish Poems*, and the *Works*, with a memoir of Dr Pennecuik, appeared in Leith in 1815. His allegory, *Truth's Travels*, in which virtue is depicted, as usual in allegories, and frequently out of them, neglected and displaced, is perhaps his best production. 1652-1722.

"When kirk was skaeld and preaching done,
And men and women baith hame,
Nae man call'd Truth to his disjeun,
Albeit he was of noble fame.
There was not one that kept a craim, stall
But they had bacon, beef, and ale,
Yet no acquaintance Truth could claim,
To wish him worth a dish of kail.

"Except pastors or judges sought him,
I trow his dinner was but cauld;
For advocats much skaith they wrought him,
He makes their gowns so bare and auld;
And merchant men, that bought and sauld,
For sindrie things could not abide him,
And poor craftsmen, albeit they wald,
They had no portion to provide him."

He does not hesitate to lift boldly what suited him in the verses of greater poets before his day.

CHAPTER XXI

THE HIGHLANDS AFTER 1745

After the Jacobite rising the clansmen scattered home to their glens, and naturally settled down to their old habits of hunting and cattle-lifting. But the Government was determined to master the country, especially by disarming the warlike inhabitants of the remote places.

In a memorial of 1747, it was recognised that the only fit method of coping with the position of things was to have forces of Highlanders, who alone were able to face the hardships of mountaineering, and whose kinship with the outlaws in blood and tongue would enable them to understand circumstances and possibilities in a way impossible to any Southron. Five companies of Lord John Murray's and the Earl of Loudon's regiments, augmented to one hundred men each, were to be set down for this purpose. With some vividness the memorialist says:

> "It is just the same as skinning over a flesh wound, while rottenness is at the bone. The same will daily break out afresh, until the wound be searched to the bottom, and the virulent distemper be eaten out by corrosives."

He is convinced that if the caterans were put down in Rannoch, Glencoe, Lochaber, Glengarry, Knoidart, Glenmoriston, and Badenoch, all the other people in the country could at once cease to keep the weapons with which they were compelled to defend themselves and their possessions, even "if they should sell their clothes to purchase them." He next proposes that the sheriffs and justices should prepare lists of

> "all villainous people who lived by stealing and robbery everywhere, as well as receipters and corresponders with those villains, or receivers of blackmail."

Careful descriptions of the Highland roads were prepared, and one can gather an interesting view of work done at the various posts, from the reports of the different captains at the stations. It seemed to be a hard life; for example, from the head of Loch Arkaig you find

"the cross ways from party to party are almost impassable to our men. Three or four days patrolling wears out a pair of shoes."

The trivial persecutions of the people under the Act of Parliament against the wearing of tartan or the Highland dress sting one to resentment even to-day. From Loch Rannoch there is a report that some few Highlanders in different places made use of a short kind of trousers, slightly different from the kilt, by which they meant to evade the law, a not uncommon exercise of native ingenuity.

At Loch Lomond-side two men were apprehended,

"who had as we took it to be the phillibeg, but they say it is only a woman's petticoat. I sent them to Major Colquhoun who has admitted them to bail, till he consults some lawyer."

The kilt sometimes attracted unwelcome attentions to some wandering cateran, as when at Inversnaid a man was apprehended for wearing it, and was discovered to be one of the thieves of the district. I fancy he was soon one of the reasons annexed to the Eighth Commandment so far as that was represented by a gallows somewhere!

In Braemar, in July 1749, a rumour had got abroad that Charlie had landed again, in the Long Island, with twenty thousand men, and the result was a sudden boldness, which led to the apprehension of a man wearing the tartan, contrary to the Act of Parliament. The Captain says:

"He had not only a plaid on, but had under it a parti-coloured greatcoat. I immediately sent him in that dress over to Invercauld, who is a Justice of the Peace. Invercauld told the sergeant that he did not now act as a Justice of the Peace, nor had not done for some time past; therefore desired him to go to some other Justice. As I cannot hear of any one in the neighbourhood, I have sent the man to Aberdeen, to be punished as the law directs. This fellow came past the castle in his plaid with all the assurance imaginable."

Surely a grave impertinence to swagger the tartan of his fathers in the eye of a Lowland martinet!

Loch Rannoch seemed to be warmly affectionate towards the ancient dress, for again that year we find that the patrols arrested Duncan MacGregor, Donald MacGregor, John Cameron, Alexander Robertson, and John Cameron "for wearing Highland clothes," while the patrols between Rannoch and Killin took up ten men. In this notice it is interesting to observe that a man could be a magistrate and yet have commonsense. For we read:

"Mr Camphell, the Sheriff Depute at that place dismissed them all. We also recovered the two men, who had been rescued at Clifton in kilts, without any alteration in their dress, than just sewing the kilt close before. In that manner they were sent before Mr Campbell, who also dismissed them. I must be obliged to send my prisoners for the future to Perth, as that gentleman seems resolved to commit none of them."

But more than the kilt began to bother them.

"As I heard the people about Killin continued to wear the trousers I before reported, and being sensible it was to no purpose to send them before the Depute Sheriff, I ordered the Corporal who commanded there, to send me any prisoners he should make, as I intended to try if some other magistrate would not suppress that dress. The Corporal accordingly took up two and was conducting them to me when the Sheriff came up to him, and before a mob that was gathered, peremptorily ordered the soldiers at their peril to dismiss them immediately, or he would that instant commit them all to prison, at the same time abusing them greatly for molesting people in a dress he thought proper to tolerate. He likewise told them, in the hearing of the mob, that if they continued to apprehend the inhabitants they were to expect whatever usage their resentment might suggest to them. I don't doubt but the country people will look upon that as a tacit approbation of any violence they will think proper to offer, and two of the soldiers who have been particularly active have been already threatened to be murdered if they don't desist. The soldiers, who were a little terrified with the threats of prison, and meeting with the same usage their comrades did before, gave up their prisoners. The people insult and triumph, and while their Sheriff protects them, make a jest of military power. All the other parts of the hills, very readily conform to the Lowland dress."

The Sheriff of Aberdeen had also a patriotic corner in his heart, for, as Farquharson of Invercauld had refused to

act against a man for wearing a plaid, the captain had sent him on to the city. It is good to read the report.

"The sergeant who went with the prisoner is now returned, and informs me that he carry'd the prisoner before the Sheriff of the County, with his plaid on as first taken. The Sheriff said in the prisoner's behalf, that it was only a dyed blanket, and not a plaid. The sergeant asked the Sheriff if the people might wear their plaids if dyed, and the Sheriff told the sergeant that the intent of the Act of Parliament was not to oppress the poor, and dismissed the prisoner."

But the captain is resolved to make himself a nuisance.

"Notwithstanding the Sheriff's judgment," says he, "I shall take up all persons that I find wearing those dyed blankets, as the Sheriff is pleased to call them."

A very vivid picture is also shown of three Highlanders in belted plaids and with side-arms, driving from Dunphail twelve cows and three horses, followed at a safe distance for two days by the owners of the cattle; while three armed men who had been seen moving about at Killiecrankie, but whose tracks had been lost, turned at the Bridge of Tummel, and made an attack upon some drovers there who were going to the fair at Crieff, in the scrimmage taking six cows which the drovers were glad enough to let go, pushing on themselves with the rest. A military patrol pursued the thieves, who ran through a wood and dodged in amongst a lot of country people engaged at the harvest, who never attempted to help the soldiers.

Braemar again appears on the scene. Says the voice across the hills:

"All is well with them here, only we had a race after a highlander who appeared in highland dress and compleatly armed. He fairly outrun all the party, and as he was going into a wood, we fired upon him, but missed him, but I imagine we shall see no more of him in that dress."

In the parish of Buchanan, in Stirlingshire, the old Buchanan spirit of the "King of Kippen" seemed to have still had a corner of its own in the heart of the magistrate, for a corporal and some soldiers having apprehended a

Highlander for carrying arms brought him to a Justice of Peace,

"whose name is Will Buchanan, who told the corporal he would give him a receipt for the gun, and enquire whether the man lived within the bounds of the Disarming Act. But the corporal says he dismissed the highlander, and was likewise informed that he returned him the gun."

It was most undignified as well as embarrassing to see these soldiers of the king running out of breath after any poor man that had a rag of tartan about him, but they were evidently keen gymnasts. The captain has quite a long complaint about the treatment of three of his soldiers, who one day met a man MacIntosh, with another, in a tartan jacket and philabeg, driving a horse. He fled into the shelter of a wood, but his faithful dog followed and so betrayed him. When they had reached within two miles of Invergarry about twenty women, offering release-money as they went, escorted them to a dense wood, when suddenly six men started out of ambuscade and grasped their arms, while the women, clutching their legs, threw the soldiers to the ground. Threatened with their own bayonets the soldiers were only too glad to swear an oath not to molest them again. The three dejected men returned by a bye-way, and on their report a detachment of fifteen soldiers was despatched with the following letter by the irate Captain :

"You are to find out and bring home the men and women concerned in the rescue of the prisoner taken up by the men of Corporal Elder's party, for wearing the highland dress. If you meet with resistance, you are not to fire, unless there is danger of your being overpowered, but to make use of the butt ends of your firelocks, or, if these are not sufficient, of your baynots, and you are to publish and make known, to the country people, that to rescue a prisoner from the hands of the troops is an act of rebellion, and that I shall for the future treat as rebels those who shall presume to attempt it."

MacIntosh was recaptured, and sent on to the Sheriff at Inverness, but as the captain has doubts regarding the impartiality of that functionary, he retains meanwhile one of the leaders of what he calls "this kind of infant rebellion," along with four women, whose tongues, you may be sure, must have kept Fort Augustus ringing with protests, and he

issues an ultimatum to the effect that any soldier who allows his piece to be taken from him by any number of unarmed Highlanders, without first having made use of it, shall be tried for cowardice.

Aberdeen was inclined to have sport at the cost of the law, as, for example, where Captain Edhouse, of Pultney's regiment, writing in somewhat of a pet, says that he had sent one Donald Stewart of Braemar to Aberdeen for wearing a part of a Highland dress. The jail-keeper gave them a receipt for him, but the man was at home before the party that arrested him! Another sergeant took up a man on his way to Aberdeen, and carried him before a Justice of the Peace. He set him at liberty also, though he had on a tartan coat with a waistcoat under it. "In short, the Justices of this neighbourhood seemed to pay little regard to the Act of Parliament," and the angry captain is going to send the next that he has to Perth.

In the Cabrach, one Will Gow went into Corporal Ross's quarters in full Highland dress, and when challenged and attempted to be arrested, knocked the corporal down, when a mob arose and dared the corporal and party, for their lives, to interfere with Gow; but the Highlander was wounded, apparently mortally, and the party had to fly for their lives to Strathbogie from the angered people. Down in Clova and at Cortachie, John and Robert Lindsay having been busy drinking and singing disloyal songs, the sergeant sent four men in the night to apprehend them, but they fortunately were not at home to such a caller. Robert gave bail, but John absconded, having previously drunk confusion to King George, and probably confusion to himself; but Captain Sharp is in hopes that he will yet put salt upon his tail.

In Glenmoriston, when a messenger was sent with a letter to the Laird of Chisholm, he found Chisholm's servant with a kilt on him, who ran upstairs at once, and when Turnbull demanded that the man be handed over to him, the chief made answer that he would not cringe to him nor to the best officer in the army, and sent him away with that in his cheek.

Again, in Strathglas, when Turnbull arrested a prisoner, the people ran together and told their laird, in hearing of the corporal, that they were strong enough to rescue him if he approved of it, but the chief would not allow them to

get into difficulties. Strathglas evidently attracted angry eyes to it, for, Archibald Chisholm having been arrested, on the day following a young fellow in full plaid was pursued by the same party on their patrol. To avoid them he attempted swimming a loch and was drowned, much to the wrath of the people, who declared that he was shot by the soldiers while in the water.

One's blood boils to think of our countrymen oppressed in this way by a law which could find no argument but spite, and hate, and ignorant narrowness for its justification.

The modern life of the Highlands and Isles began after 1745, when the chiefs and the people alike endured the revenge of the Hanoverian Government, which at Culloden had secured itself in the throne of the old Stewarts. Then began the foretaste of many sorrows—the power of the chiefs being taken from them, many sent landless into exile, and the weapons of the clansmen snatched from their hands. There was no longer necessity to keep on one's territory a band of fearless, fighting men. The warriors became cotters, crofters, and hangers-on ; the chief became a landlord ; rents instead of claymores became necessary from the land. So there began that woeful expulsion of the Highland people from the Highlands, the very hands of those for whom they had fought so often thrusting them out of the old homes into the cold outer world.

This was the great period of poetic quickening in Celtic Scotland. Before the Forty-five elegies and eulogies for chiefs and patrons had been practically the sole production of Gaelic bards of historic times, with the exception of aphoristic compositions. Now all forms of lyric utterance were utilized. After the Forty-five the muses naturally spoke deeply and tenderly, and with fierce enthusiasms, of the episode that had so wonderfully stirred the Gael. The bards of the mid-eighteenth century, whose verse was the greatest expression of the ocean and the hill, were Macdonald in his *Birlinn*, and MacIntyre in his *Coire-cheathaich*, and *Ben Dorain*. William Ross, Ewen Maclachlan, and the others named above, sang also not only of love, but of Nature and the seasons. The beauty of Nature environs and enfolds every topic they take up into their verse. The poetry of passion broke into the conventions of Gaelic poetic composition now also ; while the Celt found comfort and shelter

out of the terrible experiences of his race in the writing of hymns and sacred songs. Sorrow and failure, agony and despair, gave a new bias and a new voice to the Gaelic singer. In 1751 appeared Macdonald's poems, Dugald Buchanan's in 1767, and Duncan Ban MacIntyre's the next year. It was therefore clearly a period of awakening and industry for the Gaelic muse. The fact, however, that before these there was no Gaelic production in print, nor any printing press within the Highland line, that the Lismore and Fernaig manuscripts, and the books of Clanranald, of prime importance, were practically unknown, and their value not esteemed even by those who owned them, makes it little wonder that outside of the Highlands few knew that there was such a thing as literature at all in the remote territory of the Gael, till the disturbance provoked by Samuel Johnson's attack on Macpherson's *Ossian* in 1760, not only instituted a search, but initiated activity of production.

Looking back at the notable bards of the eighteenth century, we find Alexander Macdonald, son of an Episcopalian parson in Moidart, on account of which the poet is known as "Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair," sent to Glasgow University at the command of the chief of Clanranald to study law. But love laughed at lawyers, and he married Jeanie Macdonald of Dalness. Poverty followed on the heels of love, and looked in at the door to see if there were room for settling at the poet's fireside. It never quite won possession, but it had frequent goings and comings all the poet's lifetime. The Royal Bounty, as it was called, was an annual gift of one thousand pounds to the General Assembly of the Church, begun by George I. in 1725, for helping education in the Highlands; and Macdonald was appointed teacher-catechist of his native Moidart. The emoluments were merely a kind of decoration on starvation itself; for in 1729 they were sixteen pounds, in 1732 eighteen, falling from that maximum till in 1744 they amounted to twelve. He eked out this with the fruits of hard labour on a little farm where Nature spoke to him, stirring him to verse. There he compiled his *Gaelic Vocabulary*, published in 1741, the first attempt of the kind in the language. He was pioneer also in the matter of printing a book of Gaelic poetry, great and masterful in lyric power and phrase. Songs of love, songs of Nature,

1701-1780.

songs of national and Jacobite interest, flowed as spontaneously as the rivers and streams familiar to him. His *Birlinn* or *Galley of Clanranald* is his greatest work. The storm hustles through the poem, the sea hisses around the boat in fury, sails are rent into ribbons, masts bent, planks started, rigging snapped, but the brave galley wins its haven, plucking a victory out of the jaws of death pursuing. In his *Sugar Brook* the birds sing softly,

"A sorrowing note that yet is pleasing to the listening heart."

The wild swans' wail mingles in their singing.

In his *Ode to Summer* his touch is delightful:

"Primrose trembling on the brae
Delicate and pale,
Springing from the waking clay,
Sweetening the vale.
Bravest thou of all the blooms
Forth in Spring's robe creeping,
With thy flowerlets' fresh perfumes
While the rest are sleeping."

Tired of this poorly-paid struggle, he at length left his appointment, in 1744, without notice. The Presbytery had, however, for a while, its eye upon him for "composing and singing indecent songs," as well as other circumstances not very pleasing. Into these conditions flashed the coming of Prince Charlie, and the bard leapt into the movement, being present at the raising of the standard at Glenfinnan. He was the Tyrtæus of the Rising, the Körner and Arndt of the Jacobite enterprise. His *Song of the Clans*, and especially his *Morag*, vibrate with power.

Morag is taken as a type of Prince Charlie exiled, the poet calling her to come home again, and to bring other maidens to beat and waulk the "red cloth," meaning, of course, the soldiers of King George.

"Could my arms but reach to catch you
Only grasp of death would free them.

"I would follow you and serve you,
Still unswerving in allegiance.

"Cling to you with love compelling,
Like the shell to rock adhering. . . .

"There would come, did you but call them,
Many a stalwart Highland hero,

"Who, with sword and shield, would surely
Cannon's thunder charge unfearing. . . .

"Good at need when swords at playing,
When the claymore round is sweeping.

"Then they full the cloth so rarely,
Using care to pound it neatly.

"Firm and close they leave it lying
Crimson-dyed, like blood appearing."

After the Act of Indemnity in 1747 the poet was appointed by Clanranald to be land-steward in the Island of Canna. It is said that some of his Jacobite verses, published in 1752, were burned at the Cross of Edinburgh ; and it is indeed a marvel that he himself escaped, for nowhere does the fire and fervour of Jacobite affection beat so fervently as in his verse.

Duncan Ban MacIntyre also sang of the same episode. His *Ode to Falkirk* could not be published during his lifetime, lest it should bring him into difficulties with the Government.

1724-1812.

John Roy Stewart was stronger in his Jacobite poetry than Duncan Ban. He was a romantic figure. Fighting against the army of Cumberland in Flanders, he heard of Prince Charlie's enterprise, and at once hastened to Scotland to give his sword for the service of the Prince. He emerged from the ruin of all his hopes, crushed by sorrow, all the more as it was against his advice that the disastrous battle had been faced before the Highland army was quite ready for it. He mourns the treatment of his people, and his verses on Culloden are extremely valuable as pictures of the condition into which the Highlands were crushed by Cumberland :

1700-1752.

"On my heart grief is pressing,
For the wounds and distress of my land ;
King of Heaven still guard us
From our foes that are hard on each hand.
On our track is Duke William
And we fall by his villainous band,
Till the vilest and basest
On the flower of our race have their stand. . . .

"In the woods we are hiding,
In the glens and the wide hills around,
Without solace or pleasure.
Never hearing sweet measures of sound;
Food and fire both are failing,
And the mist is a veil on our sight;
Like the owl's is our calling,
That is heard at the falling of night."[1]

Duncan Ban, the bard of Glenorchy, though he passed through the struggle of 1745, remains rather as the poet of Nature than of political strife. His poems are uncontaminated by English, which he never learned to read or write at all until in late manhood. The forest, the mountain, the riverside, and all the occupations of sport and wild life, engaged his loving attention. He lived right in the heart of Nature, and had for company the wild creatures of the solitude, and the traditional songs and stories of his folk. He fought at the battle of Falkirk in the Hanoverian army, having undertaken to be substitute for Fletcher of Glenorchy for a small fee, using Fletcher's sword. He was not, however, ashamed to run away with the others who were running, for his heart was not in the cause for which he fought. Fletcher having meanly refused to pay his promised fee, Duncan Ban wrote a satire on the fellow's meanness, and especially on Fletcher's sword, which he had flung from him. It was a blunt sword, an inglorious sword, unburnished by brave men's use. He poured out his sarcasm, not only along the weapon, but on the man who should have been using it.

Duncan lived the life of a forester, first to Breadalbane and then to Argyle. Nature awakened poesy within him. He has been compared to Burns for the beauty of his descriptive power. His martial songs comprise not only songs of the Jacobite rising, but songs of the Gaels' warlike achievements, and the glories of the Highland regiments. His satiric gift was very great. He entered the City Guard of Edinburgh, and his dust is in Greyfriars Churchyard.

His love poems are outstanding even amid so many as are in Gaelic literature. His *Mairi Bhan Og* is one of the songs which to the Gael never become commonplace; it is esteemed the queen of Gaelic love songs. He did most useful parochial work against those whom he disliked, or whom he

[1] MacLean's *Literature of the Highlands.*

thought to be worthy of the castigation, pretty much in the spirit of Burns himself, and once he went outside the limits of the parish and sat upon the notorious John Wilkes, M.P., fortunately for that gentleman in a language which he did not understand. MacIntyre rises to his height in *Coire Cheathaich*—the *Misty Corrie*—and *Ben Dorain*, which take their place alongside of Macdonald's masterpiece. *Ben Dorain* consists of five hundred and fifty lines. It is full of the clearest observation. The quiet places with the deer in them, and all the wondrous love of Nature in the mountains, live in his verse. MacIntyre was a poetical Landseer of Highland life. His description of the mountain stream in *Coire Cheathaich* is fresh and touching:

"Where dark water-cresses grow
You will trace its quiet flow,
With mossy border yellow,
In its pouring,
With no slimy dregs to trouble
The brightness of its bubble
As it threads its silver way
From the granite boulders grey
Of Ben Dorain.
Then down the sloping side
It will slip with glassy slide,
Gently welling,
Till it gather strength to leap,
With a light and foaming sweep,
To the corrie broad and deep
Proudly swelling;
Then bends amid the boulders,
'Neath the shadow of the shoulders
Of the Ben,
Through a country rough and shaggy,
So jaggy and so knaggy,
Full of hummocks and of hunches,
Full of stumps and tufts and branches,
Full of bushes and of rushes,
In the glen;
Through rich green solitudes,
And wildly hanging woods
With blossom and with bell,
In rich redundant swell,
And the pride
Of the mountain daisy there,
And the forest everywhere
With the dress and with the air
Of a bride."[1]

[1] Blackie.

In this he achieved a great work, for he opened the eyes of his own people to the beauty of the world that was about their feet. His descriptions of the lonely world so familiar to him never fail in their directness :

"Oh ! 'twas gladsome to go a-hunting,
Out in the dew of the sunny morn :
For the great red stag was never wanting,
Nor the fawn nor the doe with never a horn.
And when rain fell, and the night was coming,
From the open heath we could swiftly fly,
And, finding the shelter of some deep grotto,
Couch at ease till the night went by.

"And sweet it was, when the white sun glimmered,
Listening under the crag to stand,
And hear the moor-hen so hoarsely croaking,
And the red-cock murmuring close at hand ;
While the little wren blew his tiny trumpet,
And threw his steam off blithe and strong,
While the speckled thrush and the red-breast gaily
Lilted together a pleasant song !

"Not a singer but joined the chorus,
Not a bird in the leaves was still,
First the laverock, that famous singer,
Led the music with throat so shrill,
From tall tree-branches the blackbird whistled,
And the grey-bird joined with his sweet 'coo-coo' ;
Everywhere was the blithesome chorus,
Till the glen was murmuring through and through."[1]

It is most remarkable that his poetry, which amounted to about six thousand lines, was not written down until twenty years after his first song was composed. The bard having no knowledge of penmanship, he carried them in his already well-stocked memory until Dr Stuart of Luss wrote them out from his recitation.

In his later life he revisited his favourite mountain, and wandered through the glens, an aged man, over whom had passed seventy-eight long years. Looking around the scenes of his early joys he found only sadness with him. The people were already going westward over the sea before the bleating sheep that were taking their places. His *Last Adieu to the Hills* is full of the pathos of the long good-bye.

[1] Robert Buchanan.

Ewen MacLachlan, the Lochaber bard, was notable for his scholarship, and studied at Aberdeen for the church, but was turned from his purpose by Beattie of *The Minstrel*, who, struck by the linguistic ability of the young Highland student, considered him destined to a professorial chair. That destiny, however, did not fall to him. He became rector of the grammar school of Old Aberdeen, and assistant to the librarian of King's College. He wrote verses in Latin, English, Gaelic, and Greek, and published these in 1816 as *Metrical Effusions*. When he died, he was translating Homer's *Iliad* into Gaelic heroic verse, having covered nearly seven books, and he was also compiling the Highland Society's *Gaelic - English Dictionary*.

1775-1822.

Rob Donn, the bard of Reay, in Sutherlandshire, remains as " Rob Donn," it being uncertain as to whether his name was Calder or Mackay. His eyes, ears, and heart were the sole teachers he ever possessed. He became herd to a local grazier, and in attending to his master's interests travelled about the country to the markets in the south, as well as all over the Highlands. Stirred by his master's account of Prince Charlie's appearance in Edinburgh, he wrote an ode in favour of the Prince, and another against the Act which made it illegal to wear the Highland dress. In 1759 he joined the ranks of the First Sutherlandshire Highlanders. It is not certain whether he actually served as a soldier or as friend, comrade, and song-maker of the regiment. His poems were published sixty years after his death, his countrymen at the same time raising a monument to his memory, with inscriptions in English, Gaelic, and Greek and Latin, not one of which the bard himself could have read. He lived a respected life, and was as influential as the pulpit in the parish by his satire and his " pith of sense and honest worth."

1714-1778.

In a remarkable way the influence of Pope, the English poet, affected the compositions of this bard at the other end of the British Isles, for the parish minister had rendered some of Pope's poems into Gaelic, and made free use of them in his meetings. The effect of this is seen in the number of " quotable couplets " in Rob Donn's work. His elegies, love, and satiric poems are such as lift him deservedly into contact with the poetic masters of his race. His *Shieling*

Song is considered his best. As rendered by Pattison, its character may be gauged:

"O sad is the shieling,
And gone are its joys!
All harsh and unfeeling
To me now its noise.
Sweet Anna—who warbled
As sweet as the merle—
Forsook me—my honey-mouth'd,
Merry-lipped girl!
Heich! how I sigh;
While the hour
Lazily, lonelily,
Sadly goes by!"

William Ross, however, is beyond question the prince of Highland lyrists, and worthy of the descriptive epithets "the Burns of the Highlands" and the "Gaelic Anacreon." A scholar with considerable proficiency in Latin, Gaelic, and Greek, and vocal and instrumental music, he became schoolmaster of the parish of Gairloch in Ross-shire. Passionate love rejected threw him into deep dejection, and he died before his thirtieth year. Polished, scholarly, clever verse, transfused with the spirit of truest poetry, flooded with music, came from his heart. He can fling out a word picture like this, masterly and convincing: 1732-1762.

"Strains the mavis his throat,
Lends the cuckoo her note,
And the world is forgot
By the side of the hill."

The Cuckoo of the Grove, one of the greatest favourites in Gaelic minstrelsy, was usually attributed to Ross, and it has been truly said that, if Burns had known Gaelic, it might easily have been suspected that he owed a debt to this song in his *Banks and Braes*:

"Small bird on that tree, hast thou pity for me,
Out through this mild misty gloaming?
Would I were now 'neath the dusk of the bough
All alone with my true love roaming."[1]

Humour, satire, tender and pathetic interpretation of Nature and love are the strong characteristics of the Gaelic bards. As has already been pointed out, the agony of the

[1] Pattison.

national experiences after the Forty-five was naturally productive of original emotional verse.

The greatest of the sacred bards after Columba was Dugald Buchanan, whose *Spiritual Songs* is among the holy books of the Gael. The influence of a somewhat gloomy religion never left his life. He was a Highland Bunyan. He dreamed of the Day of Judgment, and himself sentenced to everlasting flame. He felt opposed and teased by providential interventions. At the same time he had merciful dispensations. At school he nearly died of fever, he was nearly drowned, and once the bayonet of a drunken soldier almost terminated his existence. His diary from 1741 to 1750 is a record of religious experiences which strongly remind the reader of Augustine and the Tinker of Bedford. His vivid imagination moved along a narrow way, with the fears of eternal pain continually beside him. Hell fascinated him. In the Forty-five several of his friends suffered execution after the fall of Carlisle Castle, and his soul was so bitterly shaken by the angry thoughts of revenge that his Christian fervour was almost extinguished. He lived a varied life till he was appointed teacher in Rannoch, where his religious influence soon made itself felt in a wild and irreligious district. The difficulties he had to face may be guessed from the fact that, when he went to a remote corner to preach, the two different sections of the population were at feud, and while extremely anxious to attend his service, could not trust each other in close contiguity, lest there should be bloodshed. The poet, therefore, had to stand on a boulder in the middle of the stream which separated the two bodies of people, who were seeking Christian instruction, and yet hated each other so that they could not be even in the same place for worship.

1716-1768.

Among his sacred songs the most notable is *The Skull*, where quaint imagination and deep religious feeling combine to make a notable production. The influence of Shakespeare, Doddridge, Isaac Watts, and Thomson are evident in his life and work, and *Hamlet* undoubtedly suggested his masterpiece:

"I sat all alone
By a cold grey stone,
And behold, a skull lay on the ground!
I took in my hand,
And pitiful scanned
Its ruin, all round and round. . .

"In thy cheek is no red,
Smooth and cold is thy head,
Deaf thine ear when sweet music is nigh;
In thy nostril no breath,
And the savour of death
In dark hollow where beamed the bright eye.

"No virtue now flashes
'Neath eyelids and lashes,
No message of brightness is sped;
But worms to and fro
Do busily go,
Where pictures of beauty were spread.

"And the brain that was there
Into ashes and air
Is vanished, and now hath no mind
To finish the plan
It so boldly began,
And left—a proud folly—behind.

"From that blank look of thine
I gather no sign
Of thy life-tale, its shame or its glory;
Proud Philip's great son
And his slave are as one,
When a skull is the sum of their story. . . .

"No whit care the worms
For the strong man of arms,
On his brain they will banquet full well;
And the skull of the bold
Is a garrison hold
For the black-mantled beetle to dwell."[1]

In his *Skull* he draws, from the poor fragment of humanity's wreckage, lessons, morals, and warnings—sermonizing and yet all the while a poet. By the year 1875 there had been twenty-one editions of Buchanan. His poetry touched a deep chord in the people's heart.

The period after the Forty-five, it is quite evident, was a period of Gaelic Renaissance, and even into the nineteenth century the impetus of the national emotion was carried forward. Perhaps the greatest of that century, and truly a bard, was Livingston. Though brought up in poverty, and with scant opportunity, he yet made himself sufficiently master of Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Welsh, and French, to use these as implements of knowledge. He

1808-1870.

[1] Blackie.

was a poet of great power, and had the distinction of having been the first in historic times, at any rate, to write a long Gaelic dramatic poem, *The Danes in Islay*. He was an intense lover of his country, uncompromising in his attitude towards the changes of modern times, and in his farewell word one feels, even through the translation, the conviction of the man speaking:

"Though the sun is shining brightly,
And bright flowerets gem the lea,
And a thousand sheep are feeding
On the land so dear to me;
Though the shag-haired nolt is browsing
On the brae and in the glen,
I have seen, and I will sing it,
Islay, thou hast lost thy Men."

Evan MacColl, the bard of Loch Fyne, wrote in English and Gaelic. He wrote as an exile, having emigrated to Canada. His poetry attracted the attention of Francis Jeffrey, Hugh Miller, and P. J. Bailey. It is sweet, limpid, especially in its Nature pictures, but, if anything, suffers from being somewhat crowded with similes:

1808-1898.

"She died—as die the roses
On the ruddy clouds of dawn,
When the envious sun discloses
His flame, and morning's gone.

"She died—as dies the glory
Of music's sweetest swell;
She dies—as dies the story
When the best is still to tell!"

Of others of the nineteenth century, Dr MacLachlan of Rahoy and Campbell of Ledaig wrote charming lyrics, full of love of Nature and fatherland.

Most notable of modern Gaelic poets, however, is Neil Macleod—*Niall dubh nan Oran*—the Skye bard. He has all the influences of the old bards, sarcasm with genial laughter in it, the gift of passionate clear-running love-song, with devotion to the thought of home and the home-land. Many of his songs have already become, in his own lifetime, folk-song.

1843.

Another notable Skye singer was Mary Macpherson—*Mairi nighean Iain bhain*—who composed nine thousand lines of verse in her songs, which were written down from her recital by Mr John Whyte, Inverness.

1821-1898.

In our later days considerable attention has been devoted to rendering many of the best hymns and songs of the Gael into English. The leaders in that pursuit have been Lachlan MacBean, who has given much care and loving labour, especially to hymns and sacred songs; Malcolm Macfarlane, who is working upon the consideration of the traditional music in connection with the poetry; and Henry Whyte, known wherever Gaelic is known, by his *nom de plume* of "Fionn"; while especially outstanding is the work of Pattison of Islay in his *Gaelic Bards*.

Professor John Stuart Blackie, whose enthusiastic love of Gaelic was the means of awakening Scotland to the study of its literature; Principal Campbell Shairp, whose interest in Duncan Ban MacIntyre was intense; Robert Buchanan, who gave decidedly the best versions in English of MacIntyre's *Farewell to the Mountains* and *The Misty Corrie*; the Rev. Dr Stewart, "Nether Lochaber"; and Sheriff Nicolson, are familiar to the Gael, as they were also well known for their English writings and scholarship.

The most interesting work, however, which has been done in this field, and done so that it never can be eclipsed, was that by Alexander Carmichael, in his *Carmina Gadelica*. During his peregrinations through the Highlands, and especially the Islands, while engaged in work under the excise, he, as a lover of the traditions and literature of his people, gathered with tender affection fragments of hymns and invocations to the saints which lingered brokenly in remote places, soon to pass for ever away, like the light of the days that are dead. His work is one of the noblest monuments of patriotic insight ever achieved, and is of lasting value.

1832-1912.

CHAPTER XXII

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY POETS: THOMSON, ETC.

THE Scottish poetry of the eighteenth century was under the power of Pope, but we find within it throbbings after a new life.

The strong man of this Anglo-Scottish period who, more than any other writer of his time, helped to turn the muse of English verse away from the bondage of convention back to Nature, was James Thomson, the author of *The Seasons*, son of the minister of Ednam. He spent his childhood at Southdean on the Jed, to which his father had removed, and he went to school at Jedburgh.

1700-1748.

Although the scenery of his great poem is not, on the face of it, Scottish, yet there can be no doubt that it is the spirit of the Jed which runs through his verse, and the voice with which Nature had spoken to him in the pastoral glens of the Borderland, awakening his soul to poesy, was the voice which stirred the poetic utterance of his time out of the habit of mere verse-artifice, and led it from cold conventional formality to the truth of Nature.

Like so many Scottish lads of talent, he had the pulpit as an ideal when he entered the University of Edinburgh, and, in the society in which he lived, he came under the influence of his day, which had before it, as an aim, the stripping of every form of Scotticism from its vocabulary. The result of this was that thought got clothed in somewhat artificial garb, and utterance was inclined to walk on English stilts. One has only to read Thomson with watchful eye and the ear of understanding to note that he is using English almost as an acquired tongue. Indeed, his conversation was all his life strongly Scottish.

In his twenty-fourth year he sailed from Leith for London, and henceforward England was his home. That very year saw, in Edinburgh, the appearance of Allan

Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd*. The scholar bade farewell to native scene and native town, but the simpler poet held the fort at home on behalf of the ancient spirit of his native land.

In England, Thomson after a while found good fortune waiting him, in the form, first, of a tutorship in the family of Lord Binning, who was son-in-law of Lady Grizel Baillie. In securing this he was helped by his former college friend David Mallet. He made the acquaintance of many who were able to forward him, and he received in due time positions which brought him opportunity of leisure.

In 1726 appeared, through the agency of John Millan, his poem *Winter*, for which he received three guineas. Dr Johnson said in regard to it, that being of a new kind, few would venture at first to like it, yet a second edition was called for within three months, and five editions sold in two years. It consisted originally of five hundred and four lines, but Thomson had a restless fever for revisal, correction, and addition, so that by 1746 it was longer by five hundred and sixty-five lines. In reality, however, its final form had six hundred and sixty lines added, as almost one hundred lines of the first edition were dropped altogether, being carried bodily forward into the poem of *Autumn*. Its immediate success proved the soul-weariness of the world over the artificial verse which had filled the poetic page of the time. It took men out to where the winds were blowing, where the shepherd was in the snow-drift, and where the peasants at the fireside told their time-old tales of ghosts and goblins. It re-opened the door which Gawain Douglas had left ajar over two hundred years before, and it gave a new revelation of the spell of Nature to a world which had grown tired of itself. In 1727, *Summer*, written in a lodging off the Strand, spoke of the charm and wonder of the shining fields; and it intensified not only the Nature-love which the poet had awakened, but the appreciation of the reading world for himself as the prophet and revealer of the beauty and charm of the earth and sky, and of the changing seasons. Befriended by the most influential persons in England, he began to find the way of life before him full of ease and happiness. In 1728 he published *Spring*, and two years later the complete *Seasons*. His work was distinguished by a growing strength, culminating in his famous *Hymn of the Seasons*.

Though he wrote *Liberty* and the tragedies of *Sophonisba*,

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Agamemnon, Edward and Eleonora, Tancred and Sigismunda, Coriolanus, and his share, along with Mallet, of the *Masque of Alfred*, in which appeared the song *Rule Britannia*, nothing further to compete with his *Seasons* came from his pen, except *The Castle of Indolence*, the excellence of which has been lost sight of in popular appreciation, through the fame of his better-known work.

From 1736 onwards he lived at Richmond an easy life, and, it must be admitted, in considerable indolence, enjoying the friendship of Pope in a measure rarely given to any other. He was sent to travel with the son of Sir Charles Talbot, through whose favour, in 1733, he had received the sinecure of Secretary of Briefs for the Court of Chancery, which he enjoyed for four years. Through Frederick Prince of Wales, by the influence of Lord Lyttelton, he received a pension of one hundred pounds a year, and in 1744 he was appointed Surveyor-General of the Leeward Isles, from which, after he had paid another man to do the work, he drew about three hundred pounds a year.

His *Seasons* was almost a direct answer to the attitude of the period, as voiced by Pope, who took for the topic of his verse, man, in the abstract, as being "the proper study of mankind." Gray wrote to Beattie that he did not think descriptions of Nature should be employed otherwise in poetry than for merely decorative purposes, for background or adjunct use, and although in his own letters and prose he shows that he felt the spell of crag and torrent, in his verse he kept closely to his rule. Just as much as Pope was a student of man, Thomson was a student of Nature. He was not the first to see poetry in the wild Scottish rain-storm, or to hear voices of wonder on the sweeping breeze, for Gawain Douglas had as keen an eye as he. But he was the first to unveil Nature, to paint with full brush the changing panorama of the seasons. In everything he touched he displayed the keen direct vision of the actual onlooker—the withered leaf whirls through the wild eddies, the cormorant wheels from the deep and skims along the land, the beat of the storm-driven ocean, the hissing spume and spray, the labouring of the toiling ships, live in his lines. The beauty of the opening spell of Spring, the breath of the south wind stirring Nature from her sleeping, the ploughing, sowing, harrowing, all human preparation for the growth of

daily bread, the sweet charm of varied blossoms, the echo of the song of birds, every picture revealing intimate knowledge, the scene vividly presented before the poet's eye in reminiscent solitude in the heart of London town, all move with pleading power. We share what he saw, even far remote from the fields of Roxburghshire.

In all his work you feel the heart-beat of a lover of the world he lives in, especially the world whose beauty spent itself in the growing of his own heart.

His description of the ocean suffered undoubtedly from the fact that he was not familiar with the sea, and the inspiration of his pictures is obviously derived from the masterpieces of a sister art, and from classical poetry, helped out by "imagination's artful aid." It is not, however, of so much importance in the case of Thomson as it should have been in Byron, Swinburne, or Shelley, for he was not a lyric poet. He had before him the models of Milton and Virgil. His poem is epic in spirit rather than lyric, and in so far as he kept this in the forefront, it is entirely successful; in fact, as great an achievement and as epoch-making in power as anything in English literature.

It is impossible, and it is fruitless, to discuss what might have been had Thomson remained in Scotland, and attached himself to the circle of Allan Ramsay. It is indeed questionable if he could have done any good at all there, for that environment was lyrical, and alien to the bent of his poetic mind. We cannot conceive him adding little tags to ballad fragments, and writing verses about Chloe and Kitty. He followed his divine instinct when he removed himself so far from Scottish fields as to secure that his heart would be haunted with the memory of Nature's scenes, which he loved, and which were familiar to him. And though he is not himself free from conventionality of utterance, he yet oftenest creates his own convention. And though sometimes he speaks his English as through a Scottish megaphone, yet he gave the best that was in him, and that was better than any other man could give at the time, and for many a day afterwards. He liberated the muse from drawing-room bondage. He took her out into the fields, and let fresh breezes blow the smell of the lamp-smoke from her. For the first time for generations the clear starlight, the golden sunlight, fell about her feet; her heart was attuned to the

wind among the sheaves or the still music of the running waters, and her cheeks got the tan and glow of the open world upon them.

Despite all that can be said in adverse criticism of *The Seasons*, lack of method, looseness of construction, inflatedness of vocabulary, occasional baldness of epithet, awkwardness of the human episodes introduced for the sake of variety, it still remains that Thomson's work was a magnificent achievement, with a vast effect on the genius of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, and their successors in the world of English literature. It has in it verses that are true poetical touch-stones, pictures and phrases that bring stillness into the room in which you read them. One cannot turn lightly from his description of remote places:

> "Where the Northern Ocean in vast whirls
> Boils round the naked melancholy isles
> Of farthest Thule, and the Atlantic surge
> Pours in among the stormy Hebrides."

There is somewhat of a royal salute in the sweeping grandeur of the lines:

> "A Drake who made thee mistress of the deep,
> And bore thy name in thunder round the world."

In certain episodes he touches sometimes absolute greatness, as in that description of the cliff from which the royal eagle draws his young:

> "A craggy cliff
> Hung o'er the deep, such as amazing frowns
> On utmost Kilda's shore, whose lonely race
> Resign the setting sun to Indian worlds."

His picture of the bull:

> "Scarce seen he wades among the yellow broom,"

brings the whin-bordered moor before your eye. His pictures of scenes in distant lands where he had never been, err, of course, but they are never inartistic. The terror of the desert is clear-cut as a sonnet, in his *Summer*:

> "A suffocating wind the pilgrim smites
> With instant death. Patient of thirst and toil,
> Son of the desert! even the camel feels,
> Shot through his withered heart, the fiery blast.

Or from the black-red ether, bursting broad,
Sallies the sudden whirlwind. Straight the sands,
Commoved around, in gathering eddies play;
Nearer and nearer still they darkening come;
Till, with the general all-involving storm
Swept up, the whole continuous wilds arise;
And by their noonday fount dejected thrown,
Or sunk at night in sad disastrous sleep,
Beneath descending hills, the caravan
Is buried deep. In Cairo's crowded streets
The impatient merchant, wondering, waits in vain,
And Mecca saddens at the long delay."

One can trace in other poets the influence of Thomson, as in those lines of his which contain within them the germ of Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn*:

"So, faint resemblance, on the marble tomb,
The well-dissembled mourner stooping stands,
For ever silent, and for ever sad."

Far better than the longer human episodes are his thumbnail sketches:

"His folded flock secure, the shepherd home
Hies, merry-hearted, and by turns relieves
The ruddy milk-maid of her brimming pail. . . .
Onward they pass."

It is apparent how objective Thomson's mind was in *The Seasons*, which lacks that modern spirit which interprets Nature as reflecting the thoughts and emotions, joys and sorrows, of the human heart — the "pathetic fallacy" as it is called. This is not remarkable, as Thomson had first to express in its fulness the beauty and charm, the freshness and wonder of Nature; the pathetic interpretation of Nature falling to those who came after him, whom he had taught to see and understand, and whose hearts he brought close to the beating heart of the world.

It is strange that men do not seem to be able to see his exquisite poem *The Castle of Indolence* because of the mass of *The Seasons* intervening. The music, the quaint old-world, drowsy atmosphere pervading the whole poem, the tender

touches of description, lift it to a place of its own, and it remains a poet's poem.

"In lowly dale, fast by a river's side,
With woody hill o'er hill encompassed round,
A most enchanting wizard did abide,
Than whom a fiend more fell is nowhere found.
It was, I ween, a lovely spot of ground;
And there a season atween June and May,
Half prankt with spring, with summer half imbrowned,
A listless climate made, where, sooth to say,
No living wight could work, ne cared even for play.

"Was nought around but images of rest:
Sleep-soothing groves, and quiet lawns between;
And flowry beds that slumbrous influence kest,
From poppies breathed; and beds of pleasant green,
Where never yet was creeping creature seen.
Meantime, unnumbered glittering streamlets played,
And hurled everywhere their waters sheen;
That, as they bickered through the sunny glade,
Though restless still themselves, a lulling murmur made.

"Joined to the prattle of the purling rills
Were heard the lowing herds along the vale,
And flocks loud bleating from the distant hills,
And vacant shepherds piping in the dale;
And, now and then, sweet Philomel would wail,
Or stockdoves plain amid the forest deep,
That drowsy rustled to the sighing gale;
And still a coil the grasshopper did keep;
Yet all these sounds yblent inclined all to sleep.

"Full in the passage of the vale above,
A sable, silent, solemn forest stood,
Where nought but shadowy forms was seen to move,
As Idless fancied in her dreaming mood;
And up the hills, on either side, a wood
Of blackening pines, aye waving to and fro,
Sent forth a sleepy horror through the blood;
And where this valley winded out, below,
The murmuring main was heard, and scarcely heard, to flow."

In this land of the lotus stood the Castle of Indolence, and thither the crowd was charmed by the mellow eloquence of the enchanter's song. They drank of the fountain of nepenthe, and so found "sweet oblivion of vile earthly care,"

After this they disappeared, wandering through the dreamy mazes of his domain:

> "As when a shepherd of the Hebrid-Isles,
> Placed far amid the melancholy main,
> (Whether it be lone fancy him beguiles;
> Or that aerial beings sometimes deign
> To stand embodied to our senses plain)
> Sees on the naked hill or valley low,
> The whilst in ocean Phœbus dips his wain,
> A vast assembly moving to and fro;
> Then all at once in air dissolves the wondrous show."

The poet peoples it humorously with certain of his friends, amongst them Dr Armstrong, another Edinburgh University man, and a native also of Roxburghshire, who is remembered by his long poem in four books, with the curiously unpoetic title *The Art of Preserving Health*. These portraits include John Forbes of Culloden, Lord Lyttelton, Quin the actor, and the poet himself:

> "A bard here dwelt, more fat than bard beseems:
> Who, void of envy, guile, and lust of gain,
> On virtue still, and nature's pleasing themes,
> Poured forth his unpremeditated strain,
> The world forsaking, with a calm disdain,
> Here laughed he careless in his easy seat;
> Here quaffed, encircled with the joyous train,
> Of moralizing sage; his ditty sweet
> He loathed much to write, ne cared to repeat."

His own friend, the Rev. Dr Murdoch, is depicted as a

> "little round, fat, oily man of God."

The Castle of Indolence was published in 1749, and the year afterwards the poet died from the effects of a sudden chill. He was only forty-eight years of age. The soul of languor and beautiful ease which this poem expresses was the natural utterance of the influence of its growth, for the poet spent fifteen years over the composition of it. He had commenced it in sport as a humorous *Apologia pro vita sua*, trying to repudiate the frequent charge made against him by his friends, of lazy and unfruitful idleness.

His plays are worth noting, but these two poems are rich enough harvest for one life. The influence of the less-known one speaks the very spirit of Tennyson, who must have

walked frequently past the drowsy fountain in that sylvan domain, so saturated and penetrated with the slumber-song of dreamland.

Thomson is conspicuous for his use of blank verse in a massive poem, apart from dramatic composition. In this respect he stands next to Milton, though his rhythm and tone are not Miltonic, but his own.

His friend, David Mallet, a Perthshire man who had gone to London, was a very different kind of person. When the name MacGregor was proscribed by Act of Parliament in 1603 many of the clan took the name Malloch, from the Gaelic word *Mollachd*, meaning "accursed." Mallet was so teased by being called "Moloch," on the instigation of John Dennis, that he altered his name to its now well-known form.

1705-1765.

Though one of the best-hated men in London for his self-seeking duplicity, Mallet was kind to Thomson on his arrival in the capital; indeed, his loyalty to his friend redeemed his character from much that was unlovely and mean. On the whole Mallet's was an undesirable personality, not free from fraud, as when he accepted a legacy of a thousand pounds from the Duchess of Marlborough for the writing of the *Life* of the Duke, but notwithstanding his pretence of industry over the task, it was found that, while he had used the cash, he had never written a line of the work. He is only remembered now by his ballad of *William and Margaret*, based, according to himself, on a verse quoted by Merrythought in Fletcher's comedy *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, in 1611. Ritson, in the historical essay prefixed to his *Scottish Songs*, says:

"It may be questioned whether any English writer has produced so fine a ballad as *William and Margaret*";

while Percy designates it as

"One of the most beautiful ballads in our own or any other language."

Sir Walter Scott, however, while admitting it to be Mallet's best work, thinks it inferior to its original, which he plausibly takes to be the old Scottish ballad of *Sweet William's Ghost*, printed first in Ramsay's *Tea-Table Miscellany*, a version of which was printed by Motherwell, and another by Kinloch.

There is no question of the truth of this statement, as Mallet's lacks the old-world grimness and eldritchry of the unknown writer, whose last verse is of another world than ours:

> "'Then she's ta'en up her white, white hand,
> And struck him on the breast,
> 'Have there again your faith and troth,
> And I wish your saul good rest.'"

It was claimed for Andrew Marvel by his editor in 1776, but David Laing refuted this unsupported statement. The ballad really belongs to a common stock, widely spread across Europe, dealing with the return of the dead, to whom sleep, even in the grave, is denied by the all-commanding power of abiding passion. Its parallel is found in the *Suffolk Miracle* in a broadsheet of 1689, in the Breton *Le Frere de Lait*, in Bürger's *Leonora*, and in a Danish bit of gruesome witchery. The idea is also found in *The Wife of Usher's Well*, but with pre-excelling majesty of weird glamour there.

Mallet suffered from the snobbery of the time, which could not forgive him for having risen from being a janitor at the High School of Edinburgh to be tutor to the Duke of Montrose, and of having been a needy Scotsman, son of a Highland inn-keeper. He also was open to suspicion as secretary to Frederick, Prince of Wales. He added to his disadvantages by his venal time-serving, selling his pen to Bolingbroke's hate, to please which he scurrilously abused Pope, though the dead poet had been good and kind to him; and, for the sake of a pension, hounding popular fury against the unfortunate Admiral Byng. Yet his poem *The Excursion*, though a somewhat servile imitation of Thomson, and his share of the *Masque of Alfred*, with his play of *Mustapha*, gave him in his day considerable reputation, which, perhaps, was not unmerited at the time. The hardest word Johnson could say of him was that he was "the only Scot whom Scotchmen did not commend," which may or may not have been true, but was sufficiently satisfactory as an opportunity for its author to get another "swipe" at Scotland! One thing may be remembered to his credit, namely, that he did not himself lay claim to the lyric *Rule Britannia*, from *Alfred*, but allowed the authorship of it to be attributed to James Thomson, though others were not so just.

Armstrong, already referred to in *The Castle of Indolence*, as author of *The Art of Preserving Health* made up in bulk and practical commonsense for what he lacked of the divine art. He was the son of a Roxburghshire clergyman, and had inherited the art of homily. His work is not quite a kind of *Buchan's Domestic Medicine* in verse, but its title shows its deficiencies. His poem is in four books, dealing respectively with air, diet, exercise, and the passions. He recognises his difficulties, as when he describes his second topic as

1709-1779.

> "A barren waste, where not a garland grows
> To bind the Muse's brow."

He does his best, however, by personifications and resonant phrase to rise above his limitations. Thomson got him to write the last four stanzas of the first canto of *The Castle of Indolence*, in which the diseases of the human frame, born of laziness, are portrayed with considerable power. He displays clear knowledge of human suffering, and in a stroke or two makes a strong picture as, for example, when he shows how

> "Sour Melancholy, night and day provokes
> Her own eternal wound. . . .
> Whate'er the wretched fears creating Fear
> Forms out of nothing. . . .
> . . . The prostrate soul beneath
> A load of huge imagination heaves;
> And all the horrors that the murderer feels
> With anxious flutterings wake the guiltless breast."

The poem is of the class of didactic pedestrian verse, but has its great prototype in the work of Lucretius, Virgil, and Boileau, and is not without its passages of power. His evident indebtedness to Shakespeare makes him notable as one of the first who turned to the Elizabethan writers for inspiration and for models.

In 1746 he was appointed one of the physicians for the hospital for sick and lame soldiers, and in 1760 was physician to the army in Germany, when, having provoked Churchill in a poem called *Day: An Epistle to John Wilkes, Esq.*, he drew down upon him all the virulence of that satirist, who sneered at his work:

> "Where all but barren labour was forgot,
> And the vain stiffness of a lettered Scot."

Another Scotsman of this time who wrote at large in blank verse was the Rev. Robert Blair, minister of Athelstaneford, in a long poem of characteristic gloom entitled *The Grave*. It used to be in every cottage. 1699-1746. It met that mood of the period in Scotland which loved to carve a Death's head and cross-bones conspicuously on grave-stones. It is the somewhat crude production of a Scottish prosodic Hervey among the tombs. It has neither music nor majesty, and its chief terribleness lies in its pathos and ruggedness. It was neither for its beauty nor its power that it was esteemed in Scotland, but largely for that morbidly inquisitive gloom which makes the village gravedigger a person of gruesome interest.

Blair is a kind of Byron with a clerical cloak on, an Edgar Allan Poe thumping a coffin, and looking through the keyholes of burial vaults. The production is neither high poetry nor prose, though in its day it held its place in every Scottish home. Blair had no skill in versification, little taste in vocabulary, and no greatness of conception. Imagine addressing Death thus:

> "O great Man-eater!
> Whose every day is Carnival, not faded yet!
> Unheard of Epicure! without a fellow!
> The veriest Gluttons do not *always* cram;
> Some intervals of abstinence are sought
> To edge the appetite: thou seekest none.
> Methinks the countless swarms thou hast devour'd,
> And thousands that each hour thou gobblest up,
> This, less than this, might gorge thee to the full;
> But ah! rapacious still, thou gap'st for more:
> Like one, whose day's defrauded of his meals,
> On whom lank Hunger lays her skinny hand,
> And whets to keenest eagerness his cravings,
> As if diseases, massacres, and poison,
> Famine and war, were not thy Caterers."

The critic that can mistake this for strength cannot himself be strong. The picture of death as a glutton with no sense to wait a little that he might become truly epicure, savours of the tastelessly grotesque.

Blair was only forty-seven when he died, but he evidently devoted considerable time to this lugubrious work. It belonged to its period—a morbid one in many respects;

and yet we can feel a little sympathy for some parts of the unwholesome poem :

> "The wind is up : hark ! how it howls ! methinks
> Till now I never heard a sound so dreary.
> Doors creak, and windows clap, the night's foul bird,
> Rooked in the spire, screams loud.
> . . . Roused from their slumbers,
> In grim array the grisly spectres rise,
> Grin horrible, and, obstinately sullen,
> Pass and repass, hushed as the foot of night.
> Again the screech-owl shrieks—ungracious sound !
> I'll hear no more ; it makes one's blood run chill. . . .
> Dull Grave ! thou spoil'st the dance of youthful blood,
> Strik'st out the dimple from the cheek of mirth,
> And ev'ry smirking feature from the face ;
> Branding our laughter with the name of madness.
> Where are the jesters now ?"

The line of thought is, from these examples, perfectly obvious.

Adam Skirving, the Haddington farmer, whose sarcastic humour was stirred by the ridiculous figure cut by Sir John Cope at Prestonpans, secured by his rollicking lines a unique immortality for both the unfortunate general himself and his cowardly soldiers.[1]

1719-1803.

John Wilson, the son of a farmer in Corehouse, became a schoolmaster in the year that Thomson's *Winter* was published. He wrote a tragedy *Earl Douglas*, which, along with a poem on the Clyde, in rhyming couplets, was printed in Glasgow in 1764. He was nominated for the post of master of the grammar school of Greenock, but the magistrates, with whom the appointment lay, made him sign a paper pledging himself to give up "the profane and unprofitable art of poetry-making." He had nine children to feed by this time, so he forsook the nine muses for their sake. The sources of inspiration of his work are plain ; Home's *Douglas* and Thomson's *Seasons* supplied a copious stream.

1720-1789.

The Rev. Dr Fordyce, for a short time minister of Alloa, thereafter a fashionable preacher in London, mentioned in Sheridan's *Rivals* and in Jane Austen's *Emma*, is more notable for his sermons than for his verse, which can scarcely be said to rise to poetry.

1720-1796.

[1] *See* p. 258.

Tobias Smollett bulks more largely as an English novelist than as a Scottish poet, yet in 1746, when the news of Culloden arrived, and London ran mad with jubilation, as ever is its wont, the tidings of the bloody methods of the Duke of Cumberland moved him to write *The Tears of Scotland.* 1721-1771.

"Mourn, hapless Caledonia! mourn
Thy banished peace, thy laurels torn!
Thy sons, for valour long renowned,
Lie slaughtered on their native ground;
Thy hospitable roofs no more
Invite the stranger to the door!
In smoky ruins sunk they lie,
The monuments of cruelty."

Amongst his other poetic productions his *Ode to Independence* lingers because of its opening lines:

"Thy spirit, Independence, let me share,
Lord of the lion-heart and eagle-eye,
Thy steps I follow with my bosom bare,
Nor heed the storm that howls along the sky."

William Wilkie, minister of Ratho, made room for himself in the temple of poetry by his great and bulky *Epigoniad,* which is an epic in nine books, running up to six thousand lines. Naturally no man could walk along the path of literary history without having to step aside in order to get round the vast bulk this otherwise forgotten poet deposited on the highway. His life was a hard struggle out of obscurity and difficulty. He had to leave the university when his father died, and to take in hand the affairs of his father's farm, in order to keep his mother and three sisters alive. He faced this duty, returned to the university, climbed to the pulpit, which was his ambition, and with clear conviction of his own powers as a poet, finished his massive work dealing with the siege of Thebes. To a second edition in 1759 he prefixed a Spenserian *Dream,* in which Homer lends him a few leaves of his laurel, which he places on the brow of the minister of Ratho, who further declares: 1721-1772.

". . . Now I shall obtain my share of fame:
Nor will licentious wit nor envy bad,
With bitter taunts my verses dare to blame:
This garland shall protect them, and exalt my name."

The reason of this gift, which the poet admits, although in all seriousness, that Homer bestowed upon him with a smile, was that Homer, with a curious kind of modesty and pride, acknowledged that a good many of Wilkie's best effects had been borrowed from him. The poem itself was suggested by Pope's version of the great Greek poet. It is deficient in continuity of interest; its similes are mostly such as pertain to lyric composition; and though great quantitatively, it lacks the quality of greatness necessary for an epic.

Wilkie published in 1768 a book of *Fables*; but he and his works very soon settled down to the position of being names and nothing more, except to the student whom nothing can daunt.

Of Thomas Blacklock,[1] the blind clergyman, the main claim is that he was instrumental in preventing Burns leaving his native country under a cloud, and it is most of all through this stretching out of the hand and coming in contact with consummate genius that he himself shines at all.

1721-1791.

Of John Skinner remembrance chiefly retains the fact that he wrote words to the old reel of *Tullochgorum*, a metrical feat of gymnastics rather than a poem, and *The Ewie wi' the Crookit Horn*, the opening lines of which were written by Beattie. He translated certain of the Psalms into Latin, and corresponded with Burns. He was a native of the parish of Birse, in Aberdeenshire, and, having gone over from the Presbyterian into the Scottish Episcopal Church, had oversight of a congregation of that sect at Longside, near Peterhead, for the long period of sixty years. He endured much persecution, because, while any of the exiled Stewarts lived, he persistently refused to take the oath of allegiance to the usurping house. His other well-known songs are *John of Badenyon*, *Tune your Fiddles*, and *Lizy Liberty*.

1721-1807.

[1] *See* p. 336.

CHAPTER XXIII

HOME, FALCONER, FERGUSSON, ETC.

JOHN HOME, the clergyman who succeeded Blair of *The Grave* in the parish of Athelstaneford, made a greater stir in the literary world, because of his play *Douglas*, perhaps the chief interest in regard to which in modern times is that it revealed most strikingly the attitude of the Scottish church towards the theatre. Home had gone to London already with a composition called *Agis*, which Garrick had declined. The journey was a serious enterprise in those days, and Home ran the risk of having his precious manuscript taken from him by highwaymen, who might not have appreciated his lucubrations as an equivalent to the coin they naturally expected from a traveller. 1724-1808.

He was not without ambitions, however, in spite of his rejection by Garrick, for he himself wrote to the image of Shakespeare in Westminster Abbey, which must have been a little amused at it:

> "Day and night revolving still thy page,
> I hope like thee to shake the British stage."

The ballad of *Gil Morrice* suggested to him a subject for the drama of *Douglas*. All his friends in the literary circle of Edinburgh were much engrossed in the matter of the evolution of this tragedy. David Hume thought that it surpassed Shakespeare and Otway at their highest, while several of his lady friends shed copious tears above the manuscript. In 1755, across snow-covered tracks, Home set off southwards for London, escorted by "Jupiter" Carlyle, minister of Inveresk, and by other friends, who rode with him the length of Wooler. It must have been a picture worth seeing—the great effort sticking out of one pocket of his overcoat, his night-shirt and night-cap sticking out of

the other, a method of procedure which his friends improved upon by stopping at the Manse for a portmanteau.

Rejected again by Garrick, he returned home with a bursting heart; but it was resolved that the work should appear, and in the theatre of the Canongate of Edinburgh, before crowded audiences, it was accordingly performed. The enthusiasm was not wonderful, for, till Home's tragedies stalked across the stage, the dramatic muse had been practically silent in Scotland since the days of Sir David Lyndsay. The name of Douglas also had a perennial charm for the Scottish heart, as Home says in his own lines:

> "Douglas, a name through all the world renowned,
> A name that rouses like a trumpet sound."

The church, however, was shocked. The Presbytery published a general warning against the evils of the stage, and especially against ministers attending the theatre. Several Presbyteries took up cases against their members. "Jupiter" Carlyle was libelled for associating with actors and actresses, persons of evil fame, as being guilty of disorderly conduct, appearing in a theatre where the third Commandment had been broken, apparently by even worse words than "haith, laith, faith, and Govey Dick!"

Home, seeing that he had roused a thunder-storm, saved himself from the conflagration by resigning his charge, to the great sorrow of his people. He became, however, secretary to Bute, and tutor to the Prince of Wales, who later on, when he came to the throne as George III., awarded him a pension of three hundred pounds, to which, in 1763, a sinecure of the same value was added.

The influence of the Duke of Argyle, of Lord Bute, and of the Prince, moved at length the manager of Covent Garden Theatre, and *Douglas* was duly performed before a large London audience. It created a society furore. Gray wrote enthusiastically to Horace Walpole, though old Sam Johnson condemned it as being a play "without ten good lines." Home, however, accepted as his due the meed of praise. Struck by the success of the rejected dramatist, Garrick now accepted *Agis*, which he had first despised. The theatre was crammed, the Prince of Wales patronizing it, and, of course, Home's fellow countrymen in London were exuberantly joyful over the success of their compatriot. But Gray, who had been so pleased over *Douglas*, said: "I cry

to think it should be by the author of *Douglas*." It nevertheless put five or six hundred pounds into the author's pocket. Another play, *The Siege of Aquileia*, was run through successfully by the influence of Garrick and Mrs Cibber, and on the impetus of the enthusiasm still existing. *Alonzo*, *The Fatal Discovery*, and *Alfred* completed his dramatic achievement.

Though these cannot be read to-day, it cannot be denied that they were successful then. They seem to have met something which the period wanted, and undoubtedly in *Douglas*, amidst all its bombast and fustian, there are Nature-touches, and a few simple lines which moved the sympathy of the people, who were ready to be so affected. In fact, it might be said that the production was just such as those who liked such productions would like.

His last work was a *History of the Rebellion of* 1745, with the fringe of which he had been brought in contact as a youth, for he was captured after the battle of Falkirk, and, having been thrown into the Castle of Doune, escaped from a lofty room by sliding down a rope made of his bedclothes.

The plot of *Douglas* is rudimentary, and seems to have been derived from suggestions of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Oedipus Tyrannus*. The tragic culmination wipes most people out, Lady Randolph herself leaping from a cliff into death. Glenalvon, who treacherously deals Douglas his death-blow when he is about to disarm Lord Randolph, is a weak Iago. The fashion of the period was to look upon Shakespeare as rude, and to consider that the best dramatic models were French; but Home had better instincts and truer taste in regard to the splendid result of Shakespeare's genius. Still, as he could not free himself from the tumid rhetoric of his day, he became a forerunner of the spasmodic school, and of the melodrama of last century.

Sir Gilbert Elliot is only worthy of mention. His poem has certainly benefited from the lustre shed upon it by the rank which the author occupied, and from his connection with the author of one of the immortal songs of our people, yet its opening lines are sweetly pastoral, reflecting the sorrow of a shepherd deeply love-wounded: 1722-1777.

> "My sheep I neglected,
> I lost my sheep-hook.
> And all the gay haunts
> Of my youth I forsook."

It is not particularly Scottish, and it has no outstanding merit, but it was highly esteemed at the time.

Dougal Graham, the bell-man of Glasgow, was a "character," who wrote a metrical history of the rebellion and some chapbooks. His *Turnimspike* laughs at his own fellow Celts for the consternation provoked by General Wade's all-conquering roads.

1724-1779

Dr Adam Austin, like more than one, was provoked into writing a very good song by being jilted, through the attractive influence of the peerage. His threat to roam through distant climes in order that the thought of his sorrows might bring sore retribution upon the fickle maid, was not, however, fulfilled any more than many another similar threat on the part of a disappointed bard, for he found solace in marriage with Anne, sister of Lord Sempill:

1726-1774.

"For lack of gold she's left me, O,
And of all that's dear bereft me, O;
She me forsook for Athole's duke,
And to endless woe she has left me, O.
A star and garter have more art
Than youth, a true and faithful heart;
For empty titles we must part,
And for glittering show she's left me, O.

John Lapraik only lives because Burns, prompted by generous recognition of his song *When I upon thy Bosom Lean*, was moved to write several epistles of approbation.

1727-1807.

The influence of Pope was now beginning to lose its hold upon Scottish writers. Thomson had shown how refreshing to the soul is the independent view of Nature. Home may be said to have touched representation of life with human feeling. And now William Falconer, the son of an Edinburgh barber, who had been sent to sea against his will, was to devote his page to depicting the power and majesty of the unstable element. He endured shipwreck near Cape Colonna, and, with other two sailors, stood alone of the crew after his escape.

1730-1769.

In 1762 he published his poem *The Shipwreck*, dealing with this tragic experience of his life. It was a new experiment on a large scale, and it suffers from comparison with the only other poetic work alongside of which it can be put,

namely, the shipwreck in Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*; but this itself owes its best excellences to Falconer's own description of the very terrible trials that come to "those that go down to the sea in ships."

Though the verse is sometimes halting, and the utterance periphrastic, yet the eye-witness power gives a direct convincingness to the descriptions. One feels, beneath labouring technicalities, the voice of a man who has grappled with Nature's wildest moods, and felt the horror of gurgling death drawing near amid the waves. In this poem Falconer did more than describe his fight for life in the deep water; he really struck out in a new track, venturing with poesy as ballast to carry her through depths where she had not previously ventured.

The influence of Pope is clearly traceable; thus, night is

> "The queen of shade,"

who

> ". . . . around them threw
> Her dragon wing, disastrous to the view."

The ship-master is summarized in just such a testimonial as Pope would have written:

> "Skilled to command, diligent to advise,
> Expert in action, and in counsel wise."

which somewhat resembles the movement of a back-water affected by the ebb and flow of the big ocean, while effecting nothing, two ideas having to utilize four clauses owing to the exigencies of rhyme. And yet the storm of *The Shipwreck* bore succeeding poets, as on a raft, far from Pope's conventions.

He who wrote *The Shipwreck* was last heard of in 1769, rounding the Cape in the ship *Aurore*, in which he and all who were on board vanished into the unrecorded.

Nothing is more unfair than to contrast Falconer's work with that of later poets who deal with sea things without being sea men, yet with the advantage of all that has been written before their day about the sea. If any man knew what he was writing about, it must have been Falconer, and he deserves the place which his first-hand descriptions secured for him. Inexpert criticism of a man's personal experience is too apt to manifest itself only in ignorant superciliousness.

In this period James Beattie, Professor of Moral Philosophy in Aberdeen, wrote his name on the page of literature with a clean, silvery outline. In the district of Laurencekirk, where he was born, there were several families of the same name, divided up into the " rich " Beatties and the " poor " Beatties. It was from the latter class the poet sprang. He had a very distinguished career as a scholar and student, and while schoolmaster at Fordoun worked hard studying French, Italian, and Nature. From this quiet country place he was promoted to be one of the masters of the grammar school in Aberdeen. While there he published a small book of verse which was received by the English critics with the assurance that, since Gray, they had not met with more melodious numbers, more pleasing imagination, or more spiritual expression. On the strength of the attention which had been directed to him through this volume, he, in 1760, succeeded Dr Gerard as Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Aberdeen.

1735-1803.

He had the gift of making extensive friendships, and at Glamis Castle he met Thomas Gray the poet. Mrs Montagu was also a warm admirer. Dr Johnson said :

" We all love Beattie. Mrs Thrale says if ever she has another husband she will have him."

He married a very beautiful woman, whose father was rector of the Grammar School, and of whom Johnson characteristically wrote to Boswell :

" Of Dr Beattie I should have thought much, but that his lady puts him out of my head. She is a very lovely woman."

In 1770 he issued his famous *Essay on Truth*, which, attacking Hume's sceptical philosophy, was at once accepted as a new source of encouragement by Christian believers, who had been plunged into anxiety through the rising strength of infidelity.

On his publication of the first part of *The Minstrel* it immediately secured an appreciative public, and won for its author access to the best literary society of London. A letter from Boswell brought Beattie into acquaintance with Johnson, with whom he sat in a tavern " from two o'clock till it was dark," after which he was introduced to Sir Joshua Reynolds. Johnson complimented him immensely. He also

met Garrick and received from him "the most agreeable reception." The king, through Lord Hailes, enquired of Beattie along what line he wished promotion and advancement, but Beattie "came to the determination that it would be better not to disclose his views to an unknown stranger." It was not till the following year that he learned the enquirer had been the king, who had already determined that something must be done for him, and had directed the Lord Advocate to discover his wishes. The king's interest culminated in a grant of two hundred pounds a year, and Beattie was offered a living in the Church of England, but he preferred to remain as he was:

"I should be apprehensive that I might strengthen the influence of the gainsayer, and give the world some ground to believe that my love of truth was not so ardent or so pure as I had pretended."

The quiet life, with prosperity moving round it, had yet its great sorrow in the mental derangement of his wife and the death of his children.

It has become the fashion to speak slightingly of Beattie's *Minstrel*, which suffered, of course, from the fact that it was early promoted to the position of a classic. Yet this beautiful stanza with which it opens is most chaste and sweet:

"Ah! who can tell how hard it is to climb
The steep where Fame's proud temple shines afar;
Ah! who can tell how many a soul sublime
Has felt the influence of malignant star,
And waged with Fortune an eternal war;
Check'd by the scoff of Pride, by Envy's frown,
And Poverty's unconquerable bar,
In life's low vale remote has pined alone,
Then dropt into the grave unpitied and unknown!"

His design was to

"trace the progress of a poetical genius, born in a rude age, from the first dawning of fancy and reason, till that period at which he may be supposed capable of appearing in the world as a Minstrel, that is, as an itinerant poet and musician;—a character which, according to the notions of our forefathers, was not only respectable, but sacred."

Of course he had to take the name of Edwin for his hero!

Beattie's odes, translations, and fables, with the pastorals

of Virgil, the first book of Lucretius, and certain of Horace's Odes, retain now no popularity. If they had the faults they had the best merits of the period in which the poet wrote. It was a period of such artificial verse that the appearance of anything with the genuine stuff in it was apt to be welcomed with a higher estimate than it was worth. His poetry was the expression, in fact, of a more refined mind than Thomson's, naturally prone to moralizing in consequence of the very position of the writer:

"Yet such the destiny of all on Earth:
So flourishes and fades majestic Man.
Fair is the bud his vernal morn brings forth,
And fostering gales a while the nursling fan.
O smile, ye Heavens, serene; ye mildews wan,
Ye blighting whirlwinds, spare his balmy prime,
Nor lessen of his life the little span.
Borne on the swift, though silent wings of Time,
Old age comes on apace to ravage all the clime.

"And be it so. Let those deplore their doom,
Whose hope still grovels in this dark sojourn:
But lofty souls, who look beyond the tomb,
Can smile at Fate, and wonder how they mourn.
Shall Spring to these sad scenes no more return?
Is yonder wave the Sun's eternal bed?
Soon shall the orient with new lustre burn,
And Spring shall soon her vital influence shed,
Again attune the grove, again adorn the mead.

"Shall I be left forgotten in the dust,
When Fate, relenting, lets the flower revive?
Shall Nature's voice, to man alone unjust,
Bid him, though doom'd to perish, hope to live?
Is it for this fair Virtue oft must strive
With disappointment, penury and pain?
No: Heaven's immortal spring shall yet arrive,
And man's majestic beauty bloom again,
Bright through th' eternal year of Love's triumphant reign.

"This truth sublime his simple sire had taught,
In sooth, 'twas almost all the shepherd knew:
No subtile nor superfluous lore he sought,
Nor ever wished his Edwin to pursue.
'Let man's own sphere," said he, 'confine his view,
Be man's peculiar work his sole delight.'"

The text of Pope's *Essay* is familiar, and "he who runs may read." Beattie's poem marked, in fact, a groping after intellectual expression of the awakening hint of the "pathetic fallacy" in Nature. Beattie was not a poet of largeness, majesty, and sublimity; but he was a poet of delicate intellectuality, seldom touched deeply with emotion, and always refined. As was natural with one whose Scottish dialect was of the broadest, he is apt to speak of the use of Scotticisms as being vulgar, and he left as a monument of his outlook in this respect a list of Scotticisms to be avoided by his countrymen. His largest fault is lack of originality, his mind being extremely susceptible to the influences of Gray, Hammond, Collins, and Pope.

William Julius Mickle, son of the minister of Langholm, Dumfriesshire, was a man of many parts, who, having failed as a brewer, went to London in quest of the literary life. Two years of hardship ensued, after which he was made corrector for the Clarendon Press, Oxford. He rendered the *Lusiad* of Camoens into English verse, which remains only as a kind of descriptive tag to his name, for nobody reads it. He had previously published the *Concubine*, reprinted as *Syr Martyn*, which is a mock antique, where "y" and "e" and "ye" are well scattered over the page to give a kind of worm-hole effect to a modern creation. It went through three editions, having been published anonymously and attributed to various authors. His claim to be author of the very fine song *There's Nae Luck about the Hoose* has been disputed on behalf of Jean Adam, who died in 1765 in the poorhouse of Glasgow, after a varied life, ranging from schoolmistress to itinerant pedlar. The authorship of Mickle is now clearly established, even although it is better than anything he ever did. This excellence which it possesses has, indeed, been used as an argument against its being his, but sometimes a man may take a leap out of his own level. Beattie added two stanzas which evoked the admiration of Burns: 1734-1788.

"The cauld blasts of the winter wind
That thrilled through my heart,
They're a' blawn by; I hae him safe,
Till death we'll never part.

"But what puts parting in my head?
It may be far awa';
The present moment is our ain,
The neist we never saw."

His ballad *Cumnor Hall* was good enough to secure the attention of Sir Walter Scott, and suggested to him his novel *Kenilworth*. Scott says of Mickle, in conjunction with Langhorne, that they,

"though deficient in the higher branches of their art, were eminent for their powers of verbal melody above most who have practised this department of poetry."

Notwithstanding this praise from so high a source, there is a great deal of wood about the ballad, which, but for Scott's notice, must have fallen into oblivion.

Mickle visited Portugal as Secretary to Commodore Johnston, and received a great ovation on account of his translation of the masterpiece of Camoens.

We have already had a glimpse of James MacPherson *en passant* while we were looking at Celtic literature.[1] Of his *Ossian* there is no question as to its fundamental substructure being genuine. Much more was made of his method of editing, to his detriment, than of that of Pinkerton, Percy, and Sir Walter Scott himself, whose "doctoring" of the old ballads was on a scale which might very well compete with MacPherson's. The most frivolous objection of all to its genuineness appears, however, in the form of a statement in Boswell's *Johnson* that in *Fingal* there is no mention of the wolf in Scotland. The argument from omission along these lines would overthrow Barbour's *Brus*, in which there is no mention of Wallace, and Michael Bruce's *Lochleven*, in which he does not, though he was a native of the place, mention the episode of Mary, Queen of Scots, the most romantic in the history of that district. A man may write a letter without mention of his wife, though he had not even quarrelled with her; but it would be a foolish thing to argue therefrom that he was a widower. In the Icelandic Saga, the geysers, perhaps amongst the most outstanding phenomena of that northern isle, do not stand forward in any way. And yet this is no more strange than the fact that in the latest popular encyclopædia there is, in the whole of the article *Scotland*, not a single hint that such a thing as the Gaelic language is the vernacular of a quarter of a million of the population, the very word Gaelic not occurring in the article. The same encyclopædia, however, is quite ready to

1736-1796.

[1] Page 31 *et seq.*

call Ossian "the supposed bard," a cynical phrase frequently covering the most crass ignorance of the subject. Notwithstanding the scorn of Dr Johnson, Napoleon, who was perhaps quite as great a man as Johnson, was entranced by the mystery and poetry of *Ossian*, and it affected the literature of Europe in the matter of the "Renascence of Wonder," as that revival has been aptly styled, and in turning men to the spell of Nature in wild and solitary places. The very argument which is sometimes used to rob Mickle of his famous song could certainly be used with greater force to rob MacPherson entirely of his *Ossian*, for nothing else that he wrote in his own name was worth the writing.

Of some of the lesser poets of this period, scarcely more than a catalogue seems necessary. Alexander Geddes was the son of a Banffshire farmer, who distinguished himself at the University of Paris, and then became a priest. Having a love episode with the daughter of the Earl of Traquair, though he kept his honour, he sought other fields of usefulness. He became priest at Auchinhalig, and devoted himself to his duties and to literature. He published in 1779 a paraphrase of the Satires of Horace. Deposed by his bishop for attending a Protestant church and for other faults, he settled in London, where he translated the Bible for English Catholics. His Jacobite lyric, *O Send Lewie Gordon Hame!* preserves his memory. 1737-1802.

Another cleric, James Muirhead, laird of Logan in Galloway, and minister of the Parish of Urr, mentioned in one of Burns's *Election Ballads*, wrote *Bess the Gawkie*, a humorous pastoral ballad of little value. 1740-1808.

A very different figure was John Ewen, a Montrose man, son of a tinker, and himself a packman, who yet, after he settled in Aberdeen selling hardware, managed, through industry and a lucky marriage, to amass a fortune of fifteen thousand pounds—a rare thing in a poet — though unpoetically he cut off his only daughter, leaving his money to an orphan hospital, an act which was cancelled by the House of Lords. He wrote *The Boatie Rows*, a charming ballad of the fisher life, quite worthy of being placed alongside *There's Nae Luck about the Hoose*. 1741-1821.

Aberdeenshire had a phase of speaking in verse at this time, for in another sphere of society than Ewen, Alexander, Duke of Gordon, whose Duchess Jean raised the Gordon Highlanders, wrote a patriotic version of *Cauld Kail in Aberdeen.*

1743-1827.

Alexander Watson, another Aberdonian, who probably thought himself to have achieved distinction by the simple fact that he made Lord Byron's first pair of trousers, an event which he considered should have won for him mention in Moore's *Life* of the poet, had attributed to him the quaintly ridiculous ballad of drunkenness, *The Wee Wifukie.* His patriotism found voice in *The Kail Brose of Scotland,* a counterblast to *The Roast Beef of Old England.* Both of his songs are in the broadest northern Doric.

1744-1831.

Hector MacNeil, who wrote *Scotland's Skaith,* was a voluminous writer. His *Come Under my Plaidie, My Boy Tammie,* and *Jeanie's Black Ee,* are to be found in every Scottish song-book.

1746-1818.

James Tytler, who wrote *Loch Errochside,* is more notable perhaps for the fact that he was the first person in Scotland who ascended in a Montgolfier fire-balloon, than for any heights which he attained in verse. He has a short song which humorously sets forth the matrimonial arguments of a Scottish wooer. It is founded on an ancient fragment, and it has the ancient humour in it:

1747-1805.

"I ha'e laid a herring in saut,
Lassie, gin ye lo'e me, tell me now!
I ha'e brewed a forpit o' maut,
And I canna come ilka day to woo.
I ha'e a calf will soon be a cow;
Lass, gin ye lo'e me, tell me now!
I ha'e a pig will soon be a sow,
And I canna come ilka day to woo.

"I've a house on yonder muir,
Lass, gin ye lo'e me, tell me now!
Three sparrows may dance upon the floor,
And I canna come ilka day to woo.
I ha'e a but and I ha'e a ben;
Lass, gin ye lo'e me, tell me now!
I ha'e three chickens and a fat hen,
And I canna come ilka day to woo.

"I've a hen wi' a happity leg,
Lass, gin ye lo'e me, tell me now!
Which ilka day lays me an egg,
And I canna come ilka day to woo.
I ha'e a kebbuck upon my shelf,
Lass, gin ye lo'e me, tak' me now!
I downa eat it all myself;
And I winna come ony mair to woo."

A poet of larger growth and power, however, now appeared, too little remembered, the light of his genius being dulled through the effulgent splendour of Burns. After Ramsay, the next crest of the wave was Robert Fergusson, who was of Aberdonian origin, though born in Edinburgh. His father is supposed to have been descended from the Fergussons of Auchtererne in Cromar, an estate which was held by them from the time of David II. to that of James IV. One of this family was minister of Crathie from the year 1600 to about 1635. The poet's father had migrated to Edinburgh about the year 1746; it may have been from circumstances connected with the Jacobite rising. He had married Elizabeth Forbes, who belonged to a family of some consequence at Kildrummie in Strathdon. The poet's parents were eager to educate him for the church, endeavouring to quicken his desire in that direction by reminding him that his great-grandfather by his father's side had been a clergyman. It is almost clear that this great-grandfather must have been the minister of Crathie above referred to. 1750-1774.

When the poet was born on 5th December 1750, in the Cap-and-Feather Close, Edinburgh, which was swept away on the making of the North Bridge, his father was an accountant in the British Linen Company's Bank.

The boy received a Fergusson Bursary, which took him first from the Edinburgh High School to the Dundee Grammar School, and thence on to St Andrews University, ostensibly to study for the church. Verse-making and pranking were, however, his chief distinctions there. The restless flame of his wit, and his power of sarcastic invective, must have been considered dangerous properties by the old, careful professors, who cannot have quite approved of the avowed ambitions of the youthful poet. He even dared, at the Bursars' ordinary

at college, when asked to say grace after meat, to express himself thus :

> "For rabbits hot, and rabbits cold,
> For rabbits young, and rabbits old,
> For rabbits tender, and rabbits tough,
> Our thanks we render, for we've had enough."

Sommers, his biographer, states that at college, by yielding to the natural impulse of his poetical talents, "he became neglectful of his academic studies." Every day produced something new, the offspring of his cynical pen, which was frequently employed in satirizing the foibles alike of the professors and of his fellow students.

His father's death two years later cut away from beneath him the possibility of further study. On his return "to his mother's humble abode" in Edinburgh, he turned towards an uncle in Aberdeenshire, in the hope of assistance towards a career. In this, however, he was unsuccessful, and he tramped back every foot of the hundred miles to Edinburgh with his disappointment.

He had to take a subordinate post in the office of the Commissary Clerk in Edinburgh. To relieve the dulness of his occupation he unfortunately found irresistible charm in the convivial clubs which met in the Edinburgh taverns. There his clever topical verse, while it extended his reputation and the circle of his friendships along a certain level, not always to be desired, also multiplied the temptations of his life.

After experimenting in English, his poem *The Daft Days* revealed his strength in the vernacular. His book of verse in 1773 brought him reputation and some money, but that year, as the result of his dissipations, his mind became unstable, and religious melancholy began to settle upon him. In 1774 he was appointed to a place in the Sheriff Clerk's office, but he unfortunately fell down a stair while in a state of intoxication. This was the final touch, and he died in the City Asylum, near the North Loch, in the terrible environment which insanity in those days carried with it, on 16th September 1774, in his twenty-fourth year.

The thought of what he might have been in happier circumstances is one of the saddest possible speculations. His work is only broken music, promise rather than achievement, yet it was strong enough to make Fergusson the true pioneer of Burns. He certainly established in that poet's

mind the due appreciation of the power of that stanza which became the peculiarly standard Scottish verse. He made it the medium of fluent narrative and descriptive ease, and handed it on to Burns to be used for these purposes by that consummate genius, who was not afraid nor ashamed to acknowledge his help.

For years his grave lay unnoticed in the Canongate Churchyard, till Burns got permission from the magistrates of the Canongate, in February 1787, to erect a monument to his memory, the date of birth on which is, by a curious slip, 1751 instead of 1750.

Fergusson was a great advance upon Ramsay, through his gift of real art, his independence of conventionality, and his genius for style, qualities which lift most of his work from being otherwise merely topical and parochial, to be truly worthy of remembrance.

Nothing gives a clearer picture of the Edinburgh of his time than the verses of *The King's Birthday in Edinburgh*, with the clanging of bells, the bang of cannon, the stir and movement of the people. His regret for the silence of Mons Meg is whimsically imaginative :

"Right seenil am I gi'en to bannin',
But, by my saul, ye was a cannon,
Could hit a man had he been stannin'
In shire o' Fife,
Sax lang Scots miles ayont Clackmannan,
An' tak his life.

"The hills in terror wou'd cry out,
An' echo to thy dinsome rout;
The herds wou'd gather in their nowt,
That glowr'd wi' wonder,
Haflins afley'd to bide thereout
To hear thy thunder."

Across his page walk, as if out of *Kay's Portraits*, the poor, old, superannuated blue-gown beggars, and the City Guard :

"Sing, likewise, Muse, how Blue-gown bodies,
Like scar-craws new ta'en down frae woodies,
Come here to cast their clouted duddies,
An' get their pay :
Than them what magistrate mair proud is
On King's birth-day?

"On this great day the city-guard,
In military art weel lear'd,
Wi' powder'd pow and shaven beard,
Gang through their functions,
By hostile rabble seldom spar'd
O' clarty unctions."

Again, in *Caller Oysters*, he has some pictures which are as delightfully fresh as the oysters themselves of which he sings :

"O' a' the waters that can hobble
A fishing yole or sa'mon coble,
An' can reward the fisher's trouble,
Or south or north,
There's nane sa spacious and sae noble
As Frith o' Forth.

"In her the skate an' codlin' sail,
The eel fu' souple wags her tail,
Wi' herrin', fleuk, and mackarel,
An' whitin's dainty :
Their spindle-shanks the labsters trail,
Wi' partans plenty."

In Hallow Fair, once a great event in Edinburgh, he again gives us a local scene in that metre which became a powerful medium in Burns's *Hallowe'en*. "Country John," "chapmen billies," the "cairds an' tinklers," the ne'er-do-weel "horse-coupers," the "spae-wives," and the recruiting sergeants all live in his lines.

He mourns the death of Scots music, which unwittingly he was helping to revive. Round Scotia, in days of old, he laments,

". . . the feathered choir would wing,
Sae bonnily she wont to sing,
And sleely wake the sleeping string,
Their sang to lead,
Sweet as the zephyrs o' the Spring ;
But now she's dead.

"Nae lassies now, on summer days,
Will lilt at bleachin' o' their claes ;
Nae herds on Yarrow's bonny braes,
Or banks o' Tweed,
Delight to chant their hamely lays,
Sin' Music's dead.

"At gloamin' now the bagpipe's dumb,
Whan weary owsen hameward come;
Sae sweetly as it wont to bum,
An' pibrach's skreed;
We never hear its warlike hum,
For Music's dead."

The directness and the beauty of his vowel collocations make his page a bit of running music. One sees the spontaneous humour of the man, which flows as naturally as the "caller water" he sings of in his verse:

"When father Adie first pat spade in
The bonnie yaird o' ancient Eden,
His amry had nae liquor laid in
To fire his mou'
Nor did he thole his wife's upbraidin',
For being fou.

"A caller burn o' siller sheen
Ran cannily out ow'r the green,
And whan our gutcher's drouth had been
To bide right sair,
He loutit down and drank bedeen
A dainty skair. . . .

"The fuddlin' Bardies now-a-days
Rin maukinmad in Bacchus' praise,
And limp and stoiter thro' their lays
Anacreontic,
While ilk his sea of wine displays
As big's the Pontic."

The same power of *genre* painting marks his *Leith Races*, and especially *The Daft Days* and *Auld Reekie*.

But, best of all, and with a touch supreme, he sings the *Farmer's Ingle*, a poem which, to the disgrace of our country, is now practically forgotten, *The Cotter's Saturday Night* having taken its place, very largely from the fact that Burns's composition is not written really in the vernacular, but in Scoto-English, while so many to-day would find difficulty in reading, without a vocabulary, Fergusson's masterly picture of the Scottish farmhouse at eve, so true even now, in places remote from modern distractions. This poem is admittedly the germ from which *The Cotter's Saturday Night* was evolved. The scene is drawn with a loving finger. Though Fergusson was a town man, the truth of it had its

secret at his mother's fireside, where many a time the old northern days would be spoken of in the quiet northern tongue. The pith of his Doric owed undoubtedly a great deal to the fact that at his own fireside his own folks would speak it lovingly, touched with the tenderness of reminiscence.

The tragedy of Fergusson's life is intensified by the fact of his persistent gaiety in the middle of his poverty and struggle. His poesy was the wing that uplifted him out of the squalor of his surroundings. No shining constellations of society stars invited him to approach the splendour of their circle; fuddling lawyers' clerks and grocers were those among whom he found congenial companionship in the evening in an inn down some dark close, or in the Cowgate! Yet the constellations were not to blame, for the brightness of his comet-like career was not noticed until it had plunged into darkness. He never had much money to spend, but he had many things to forget, and Fate to defy. His little volume, issued in 1773, brought fifty pounds to his purse, or, alas! probably, rather, to that of Lucky Middlemist in the Cowgate. His insanity and his miserable death were probably the truer harvest of his inmost soul's experience.

He has no bitterness in his wit; he does not leave scars and weals on the object of his laughter. As has been pointed out by Sir George Douglas, Fergusson was a Scottish literary Hogarth, although it was to Allan Ramsay that artist dedicated some of his pictures. The smell of whisky is the sad thing in the atmosphere above his life and verse, and the secret of its disaster. His was not the first case of a rare soul with laughter on its lips while the heavy wheel of the Juggernaut of Doom passed slowly, crushingly, over his heart. Fergusson was a compound of Villon and Chatterton. There is no doubt whatever that Burns, in his much-criticized statement — "the excellent Ramsay, and the still more excellent Fergusson"—was correct in his estimate. Ramsay bulks larger by reason of the greater bulk of his work, and by the fact that he saved the vernacular, but the lambent flame of genius shines above Fergusson.

He never stoops to vulgarity; the tradition of good descent is most clearly preserved in him, and there is no question that Burns knew what he was saying when he acknowledged that Fergusson made himself possible. Burns was an honest man; he knew himself better than any other

man knew him. He knew what he was saying, and he never deviated from the truth, and in this matter he both knew and meant what his declaration conveyed, when he acknowledged Fergusson to have been the master of his inspiration, and the true pioneer of his best work.

CHAPTER XXIV

LOGAN, BRUCE, AND THE SCOTTISH PARAPHRASES

Other poets of the period are John Logan and Michael Bruce, whose chief interest emerges in connection with the contested authorship of *The Cuckoo*, and of certain of the *Scottish Paraphrases*. No man who pretends to know the real quality of poetry is entitled to the recognition of his claim, if he can say, as has been said, that the *Ode to the Cuckoo* is "a poor enough affair in all conscience." It is too summary a judgment to declare that it contains only two lines of merit. To us to-day the best of it may have become commonplace, but it was anything but commonplace when it was written. It was as fresh and sweet an expression of Nature-music as ever touched the heart of man, and, despite the frequently supercilious dismissal of it, more than one might be ambitious to have written the chaste melodious lines. The *Ode to the Cuckoo* charmed Wordsworth, who was at any rate as good a judge of true poetry as any of our present-day captious critics.

The *Scottish Paraphrases* make up an interesting religious and literary manifestation in Scotland. In some parts of the country still, were a minister to give out any portion of the praise of the service from any composition except the Metrical Psalms of David, he would find either an angry silence, or many benches at once emptied of their occupants. So-called "human compositions" are rigorously excluded from the worship of the sanctuary. In the narrow sects the metrical Psalms are considered the final thing in praise, the last thing possible in inspired composition. This idea was once the universal notion of Presbyterian Scotland, and it was, indeed, only in 1861 that the Church of Scotland charily granted her congregations permission to use hymns in their services. It was most remarkable that a church

which refused to employ a ritual in prayer should have clung so long to a ritual in praise, demanding on the one hand absolutely free prayer, yet shackling the praise to archaic forms and rugged rhymes. Of course, around many of these old psalms the life of the nation has become entwined. In time of darkness, struggle, persecution, and murder, their words have strengthened and upheld the faithful, facing death.

The Protestant Churches of Germany, Holland, and France, with which in persecuting days our church had close communion, had in their Psalm Books many renderings and versions of portions of Holy Scripture, and some miscellaneous pieces of praise. Into the collections of Coverdale and the Wedderburns similar compositions naturally found their way. Thus, though the first complete *Scottish Psalter*, issued with authority, had nothing but the psalms in it, later editions begun to have paraphrases and sacred songs included. More than once between 1647 and 1650 proposals were considered and something done towards the preparation of Scriptural versions supplementary to the psalms, but, over all these, and trampling them out, trailed the struggles of the Parliament with the blood of King Charles upon it, and Covenanting conflicts, and the countless strifes of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and early eighteenth centuries in Church and State, distracting pitiable Scotland.

In 1741 the idea arose again from its grave. It was proposed in the Assembly of that year that

> "it be recommended to some fit persons to turn some passages of the Old and New Testaments into metre to be used in churches, as well as in private families."

Next year a committee was appointed, but the proposal dragged along with no result, till in July 1745 — the very month Prince Charlie landed in Morar—a provisional volume of *Translations and Paraphrases*, containing forty-five pieces, was sent out to Presbyteries for consideration. For thirty-six years continual reporting, recasting, and discussion of these went on, till in 1781 came forth a little book of sixty-seven pieces, which "in the meantime the minister might use in public worship where he finds it for edification." It never received the formal and final sanction of the General Assembly, and it just hangs on at the skirt of the Psalms like some stranger who has got into the church by keeping close to the

heels of a familiar worshipper. The committee only used the aid of one Irishman and two Englishmen to supplement the productions of their own church. The Irishman was Nahum Tate, and his composition was that well-known paraphrase which, as altered by the committee, begins :

"While humble shepherds watch'd their flocks
In Bethl'em's plains by night."

The Englishmen were Dr Isaac Watts and Philip Doddridge. Watts is the author of no fewer than twenty-one, including the stately :

"I'm not ashamed to own my Lord !"

while Doddridge is the writer of these three deathless sacred songs :

"O God of Bethel !"

"Hark, the glad sound, the Saviour comes !"

and

"Father of Peace and God of Love !"

The bulk of the work was done by eleven Scotsmen. The editorial part was executed by Cameron, minister of Kirknewton, and Logan, minister of South Leith.

One of the Scottish eleven previously mentioned particularly claims our attention. Few to-day remember him, or read a line of his writing, though in his own day he was acknowledged as an authority whose judgment on literary matters was absolutely final, and in one sense by a short note written to him by a brother clergyman, he may be said to have revived and preserved the nationality of Scottish literature, and especially Scottish poetry. This was Dr Blacklock. Gentle, kindly, blinded and disfigured since infancy by the terrible blight of small-pox, which was then the scourge of town and country, he disarmed that truculent but intensely interesting literary bully of the eighteenth century, Dr Samuel Johnson. When he came to Edinburgh in 1773 we read in Boswell's page how he snorted at everything and sneered at everybody, but when he met the blind poet, the roar of this strange critic fell into a human greeting with kindliness in it. He called on Mrs Blacklock, and was very gracious, though he alarmed the gentle lady by drinking nineteen cups of tea !

Blacklock was fortunate in writing verse in Scotland at a

time when the muse of Scotland was drowsing. His reputation at the time was, therefore, of a kind which the later poetic utterances of Scottish literature have utterly obscured. His father was a Border bricklayer, who, killed by accident, left his life-long blind son of nineteen years to the care of relatives whose poverty was greater than his own helplessness. The lad had from his earliest youth loved good poetry, and his schoolmaster had read the masters to him. His favourite was Thomson, whose descriptions of the beauties of a world which had been shut off from this blind boy especially charmed him, and influenced his own writings. At length, when absolute despair seemed facing the youth, with naked poverty as companion, an eminent Edinburgh physician interested himself in him, and sent him to school and college. By the influence of David Hume he received one hundred guineas for a little book of poems, and Hume actually gave him the forty pounds yearly which fell to himself as salary for the librarianship of the Advocates' Library.

In 1762, having completed his studies for the ministry, he was presented to the parish of Kirkcudbright, but the stern parishioners, with their eyes shut tight against his merits, would have no blind man set over them, and after two years of miserable strife, which almost drove reason out of this sensitive spirit, he retired on a small allowance, and left them to quarrel with one another. His house in Edinburgh became a centre of literary people. All interesting characters of the time were to be found in his drawing-room. Mrs Cockburn, who wrote *The Flowers of the Forest*, Jean, Duchess of Gordon, whose kiss was the bounty that enlisted the Gordon Highlanders, and many others, were his intimate friends. But more in influence than all his work and taste was the letter he wrote to Dr Lawrie, of London, in 1786, regarding the poems of an Ayrshire ploughman, then unknown, save in his own parish by those who loved the charming Nature-light of his verse, or who feared the scathing lash of his satire. Robert Burns, burdened with debt, skulking in the by-ways, thinking of an exile abroad, was caught by the letter of this gentle critic whose opinion was so highly valued, and he resolved to stay in Scotland and go to Edinburgh. That decision, kindled by Blacklock's influence, kept alive the flame of Scottish poetry, which at the moment had almost burned itself to ashes.

The paraphrase which Blacklock wrote has a sad atmosphere about it, but it is characteristic of his muse. It is the sixteenth :

"In life's gay morn."

Its basis is : "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." It breathes the changeableness of human hopes, the fickleness of earthly joys, the bitterness of that hour which comes to all the careless whose closing days are full of remembrance, wherein they "sadly muse on former joys,"

"That now return no more."

There are three of the Paraphrases about which has beat one of the keenest literary controversies of our history. These are :

"Few are thy days and full of woe,
O man of woman born ;
Thy doom is written, 'Dust thou art,
And shalt to dust return.'"

along with :

"O happy is the man who hears
Instruction's warning voice,
And who celestial wisdom makes
His early only choice."

And that uplifting utterance :

"Behold the mountain of the Lord
In latter days shall rise."

Critics are divided upon these. Indeed, all who are interested in Scottish literature range themselves on one side or the other. Are they the production of Michael Bruce or John Logan ? Logan published them in his own name, and, though the tendency to-day is to take from Logan everything of any merit and give it to Bruce, the matter of authorship must be left uncertain, though Logan's name must always be taken as a thing of suspicion.

Bruce was born in 1746 at Kinesswood, a weaving village, in Kinross-shire. His father was an elder in the Burgher congregation of Thomas Main, who had been expelled from the Anti-Burghers for holding the terrible heresy that Christ died for all. The home was a poor one, but the piety that shared the minister's trial was a sound environment. The father having inherited eleven pounds, gave it to ambition, and sent

1746-1767.

his clever son to college. The old story was lived out in the old grim surroundings, so familiar to many a tragedy of the clever youths of Scotland—a lad from the country in an Edinburgh garret, with a soul-hunger insatiable after books, and knowledge, and all that was beautiful in literature, with a body to be kept up for the battle on a little oat-meal. At nineteen he returned from college, parting with some books for poverty's sake, but hiding his Shakespeare and his Pope, as these were anathema to the Seceders, who perhaps were not alone in Scotland in deeming imagination a sinful jade. He taught a school during vacation time in a poor hut with blocks of wood for forms, the teacher having free board and lodgings with the parents of the twenty pupils, who paid him two shillings each for a quarter's tuition.

At Kinesswood there was a class practising the singing of Psalm tunes, and as it was accounted blasphemy to sing the actual words of the Psalms in practice, the precentors used a kind of nonsense doggerel for the purpose. Bruce was appealed to for more seemly verse, which he wrote for the tunes chosen. It is claimed that among these were the paraphrases mentioned. As he was going on to the Burgher Church, he studied with the godly Mr Swanston at Kinross, where the poor struggling students of a poor church were boarded in the houses of the adherents and members.

Thereafter he was schoolmaster at Forestmill, not far from Alloa, in a wretched hut, with damp earthen floor. All this while he was writing *Lochleven* and other poems. But when winter came he had to go home. Consumption, that relentless foe of the poor students of the world, had seized him, and he set out on foot over the twenty weary miles. He was not to be for long a burden on anybody, and he knew how near the shadows were. In his *Elegy on Spring*, one of the most touching poems of early decay, despite its echoes of greater voices, he says:

> "Now Spring returns, but not to me returns
> The vernal joys my better years have known,
> Dim in my breast life's dying taper burns,
> And all the joys of life with health are flown."

On 4th July 1767 this yellow-haired "lad of parts" was found dead in his bed, only twenty-one years old.

Then began a literary mystery. John Logan, a college comrade, got from Bruce's parents a manuscript book of poems, ostensibly with the idea of publication, in the hope of making something for the aged couple. After three years of waiting a book with seventeen pieces in it was published, with a prefatory note that these included some which were not by Bruce. Bruce's father wept over what seemed to him a mangled production, crying: "Where are my Michael's sacred poems which he wrote?" He went to see Logan, but got no satisfaction, nor could he recover the manuscript of his son. Eleven years later appeared a volume of Logan's poems, in which was included the famous *Ode to the Cuckoo*. At once Bruce's friends claimed that fine lyric for him, and since then the fight has gone on with the result still uncertain. Logan was by this time minister of South Leith, a popular preacher and lecturer. Even Edmund Burke, when he came to Edinburgh, called to express to him his admiration of the *Cuckoo*. But drinking habits seized Logan, and brought other evils of a worse kind in their train, and he had to leave his church on an annuity of forty pounds. He went to London, strongly recommended by Adam Smith. He lived the life there of a literary hack, writing for other men. His sermons were highly commended by Sir Walter Scott. But he died in 1788 at the age of fifty-one, a broken man. Isaac Disraeli says his disease was a broken heart. It may well have been so. Fine strings snap soon in a bad atmosphere. Pity for the delicate student, dead ere his prime, after the unequal fight with poverty, has alienated sympathy from the brilliant clergyman who sank into a toper's forgotten grave; and it has perhaps obscured the critical issues. The facts that he had two illegitimate children by his servant maids, that he drank, and was not straightforward, do not make it impossible that he might have written the *Ode to the Cuckoo* or anything else of lyrical excellence. The unfortunate thing is that perfect morality has not necessarily been the companion of the most exquisite poesy. There is, however, almost perfect proof of the justifiable suspicion of foul play on Logan's part. The following verse of the original issue of 1770:

1748-1788.

> "Thou hast no sorrow in thy song,
> No winter in thy year."

applied most clearly to the circumstances of the other poet

dying with his "music in him," and in the issue of 1791 the verse:

"Alas, sweet bird! not so my fate,
Dark scowling skies I see,
Fast gathering round and fraught with woe
And wintry years to me."

was omitted. The tendency to plagiarism was almost a ruling passion in Logan. He "cribbed" from Blair and others in his sermons; his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, which were afterwards claimed and published by Dr Rutherford of Uxbridge, make up one of the most perplexing literary mysteries. Yet every stroke he made of alteration on the materials of the Paraphrases was an improvement. He had a fine ear and fine metrical taste, but there was a moral twist in his nature which gave his whole life a sinister bias.

The *Ode to the Cuckoo* is immortal. It is as haunting as some bits of Keats. Logan might well have written it, for he had great abilities, though he followed a wandering star. But it is strange how the literary battles of the eighteenth century find echo and conflict-ground still in that quiet book of Paraphrases nestling in the sanctuary under the shadow of the old brave Metrical Psalms!

Robert Graham of Gartmore, whose song *Then tell Me how to woo Thee, Love*, was attributed, even by Sir Walter Scott, to Montrose himself, was in spirit a cavalier: 1750-1797.

"If doughty deeds my lady please,
Right soon I'll mount my steed;
And strong his arm, and fast his seat,
That bears frae me the meed.
I'll wear thy colours in my cap,
Thy picture in my heart;
And he that bends not to thine eye
Shall rue it to his smart!
Then tell me how to woo thee, love;
O tell me how to woo thee!
For thy dear sake nae care I'll take,
Though ne'er another trow me."

John Dunlop wrote much verse, but probably none is so good as his little lyric: 1755-1820.

"Oh! dinna ask me gin I lo'e thee,—
Troth, I dar'na tell:
Dinna ask me gin I lo'e ye—
Ask it o' yoursel'.

"Oh! didna look sae sair at me,
For weel ye ken me true:
Oh, gin ye look sae sair at me,
I dar'na look at you!

"When ye gang to yon braw, braw toun,
And bonnier lassies see,
Oh, dinna Jamie, look at them,
Lest you should mind na me!

"For I could never bide the lass
That ye'd lo'e mair than me;
And oh, I'm sure my heart would break
Gin ye'd prove false to be!"

George Halkett was a schoolmaster at Raith in Aberdeen, and perhaps did a more notable thing than he knew, when he dared to write a *Dialogue between King George II. and the Devil*, which provoked Cumberland to offer a reward of one hundred pounds for discovery of the author. He is remembered by his song *Logie o' Buchan*, which is probably kept alive by the sweetly-tender melody to which the words have been wedded.

d. 1756.

Andrew Scott, a peasant at Bowden in Roxburghshire, though he was recognised for his merits by Sir Walter and others, was content to labour on in his humble sphere, and to die a peasant in his native parish. His poem *Rural Content* would be creditable to better-known poets. The spirit of *A Man's a Man for a' That* breathes through it:

1757-1839.

"I'm now a gude farmer, I've acres o' land,
And my heart aye loups light when I'm viewin' o't;
And I ha'e servants at my command,
And twa dainty cowts for the pleughin' o't.
My farm is a snug ane, lies high on a muir,
The muircocks and plivers aft skirl at my door,
And whan the sky lowers I'm aye sure o' a shower
To moisten my land for the pleughin' o't. . . .

"Now hairst-time is ower, and a fig for the laird,
My rent's now secure for the toilin' o't;
My fields a' are bare, and my craps in the yard,
And I'm nae mair in doubts o' the spoilin' o't.
Now welcome gude weather, or wind, or come weet,
Or bauld ragin's Winter, wi' hail, snaw, or sleet;
Nae mair can he draigle my crap 'mang his feet,
Nor wraik his mischief, and be spoilin' o't.

"Nor need I to envy our braw gentlefolks,
Wha fash na their thumbs wi' the sawin' o't,
Nor e'er slip their fine silken hands i' the pocks,
Nor foul their black shoon wi' the pleughin' o't;
For, pleased wi' the little that fortune has lent,
The seasons row round us in rural content;
We've aye milk and meal, and our laird gets his rent,
And I whistle and sing at the pleughin' o't."

Among the minor versifiers who live through accidental contact of their verse with the genius of Burns, John Mayne is remembered. *The Siller Gun*, which describes a competition at Dumfries for a shooting trophy presented by James VI., is founded on such poems as *Christ's Kirk on the Green*, *Leith Races*, and *Habbie Simson*. His *Hallowe'en*, however, which was published in 1780, has the distinction that it undoubtedly was full of very valuable inspiration for Robert Burns. There is the same picture of the gathering round the farmer's ingle, the stories of ghost and fairy and witch cantrip, the testing of the future by throwing a clew in the kiln, the sowing of hempseed, in which act, as in Burns, one of the characters falls into a mud-hole. These were all full of suggestions, and were lifted into the world of glamour by the greater bard. He is worthy of remembrance if only for his very sweet ballad: 1759-1836.

"By Logan's streams that rin sae deep
Fu' aft, wi' glee, I've herded sheep—
I've herded sheep, or gathered slaes
Wi' my dear lad on Logan Braes.
But wae's my heart, thae days are gane,
And fu' o' grief, I herd my lane,
While my dear lad maun face his faes,
Far, far frae me and Logan Braes."

A remarkable instance of Scottish eccentricity of genius and pertinacity of endeavour was Alexander Wilson, known as "the American ornithologist," the author of *Wattie and Meg*. He was a weaver, but adopted the trade of chapman, hawking, along with his wares, his own volume of verse. For certain satires which he had written during disputes in the textile industry in Paisley, he was imprisoned, and had to burn his own work at the Town Cross. Hurt in feelings and estranged from his friends, he almost begged his way to America, where he toiled as weaver, hawker, printer, and

schoolmaster. The final phase, after being one of the editors of Rees's *Cyclopædia*, was his toil in the collection of American ornithology. He endured unspeakable hardship, and died after he had issued eight volumes of his great work, which, having been completed and revised, secured a standard position. He engraved and coloured all the plates illustrating the book. He is more worthy of remembrance for that work than probably for his verse. In his *Laurel Disputed* he makes out a strong case for Robert Fergusson.

Albania, an anonymous poem by a young and unknown author, who saw death's shadow over him, showed very great promise of unfulfilled renown. Only one copy of the original edition printed at London in 1757 is known to exist. John Leyden, in his northern tour, passing through Aberdeen, got permission from Dr Beattie to transcribe this copy. He published it in 1802, along with Wilson's *Clyde*, as *Scottish Descriptive Poems*. The poem consists of two hundred and ninety-six lines, and it is addressed to :

> "Loved Albania, hardy nurse of men,"

a phrase which seems to have recurred to Scott in his :

> "O Caledonia, stern and wild,
> Meet nurse of a poetic child !"

It seems to have been written on St Andrew's Day, that "old and solemn festival."

> "O dearest half of Albion, sea-walled !
> Hail ! state unconquered by the fire of war,
> Red war, that twenty ages round thee burned !
> To thee, for whom my purest raptures glow,
> Kneeling with filial homage, I devote
> My life, my strength, my first and latest song."

The poet looks far and wide, not only over the Scotland of his day, but over the lost possessions of the race in the distant past. He touches with true poetic insight the superstitions of the mountain land, especially the fairy hunting in the vast solitudes :

> "There oft is heard at midnight, or at noon,
> Beginning faint, but rising still more loud
> And nearer, voice of hunters and of hounds
> And horns hoarse-winded, blowing far and keen.

Forthwith the hubbub multiplies, the gale
Labours with wilder shrieks and rifer din
Of hot pursuit—the broken cry of deer
Mangled by throttling dogs, the shouts of men,
And hoofs thick beating on the hollow hill.
Sudden the grazing heifer in the vale
Starts at the noise, and both the herdsman's ears
Tingle with inward dread. Aghast he eyes
The mountain's height and all the ridges round;
Nor knows, o'erawed and trembling as he stands,
To what or whom he owes his idle fear."

Whoever he was, he knew the Gaelic epithets and their interpretation, for he uses for Skye the word "winged," and where Thomson, a south-country man, spoke of "*Kilda*," he employs the name which till to-day the native speaker uses, *Hirta*, and for the Hebrides and Iona, he employs the native Celtic name of *Inchgall* and *Icolmkill*:

"There view I winged Skye, . . .
And talk, at once delighted and appalled,
By the pale moon, with utmost Hirta's seers,
Of beckoning ghosts and shadowy men that bode
Sure death. Nor there doth Jura's double hill
Escape my sight, nor Mull, though bald and bare;
Nor Ilay, where erewhile Macdonalds reigned,
Thee too, Lismore! I hail St Moloch's shrine;
Inchgall, first conquered by the brand of Scots;
And, filled with awe of ancient saints and kings,
I kiss, O Icolmkill! thy hallowed mould.
Thus, Caledonia, many-hilled! to thee,
End and beginning of my ardent song,
I tune the Druid's lyre, to thee devote
This lay, and love not music but for thee."

The man who wrote this was a northerner, and knew his country well, with an intimate knowledge which the mere Saxon does not even now possess.

Another anonymous poem, called *The Har'st Rig*, first published in 1794, in the *Habbie Simson* metre, is of very considerable interest. The days are now long past for ever, when the fields were filled with happy reapers, and the farm astir with the harvest, when the Highland men and women came down from their hills to the Lothians and gathered in the grain. While this poem is a clean-cut etching of the life at a Lothian farm at such a time, it is written with a sympathy for the Highland people rare in a Lowlander,

and depicts them as being keen and hard-working in comparison with their Lowland companions. If it were written by a Saxon, it is entirely new in Scottish vernacular verse in its high estimation of the Celtic folk.

Ebenezer Picken (1769-1816) and Richard Gall (1776-1801) are names and little more, along with Gavin Turnbull (*c.* 1788), who was only a writer of imitative verse, as also was John Hamilton (1761-1814), who added sixteen lines to Burns's *Of a' the Airts*, and "improved" the same poet's *Up in the Morning's no for Me.* Richard Hewitt (d. 1794), whose verse on Roslin Castle was admired by Burns, though why, one does not at all understand, being but the old conventional draping of Colin and Nannie, was as a boy engaged in leading about Dr Blacklock, the blind poet, when he resided in Cumberland. He became afterwards Blacklock's secretary, and later on secretary to Lord Milton.

Robert Gilfillan (1798-1850), with his *O Why Left I My Hame!*; Rodger (1784-1846), with *Robin Tamson's Smiddy*; and Walter Watson (1780-1854), with his *Sae Will We Yet!* hold a place in Scottish song-books still.

The influence of the classical form of eighteenth century verse remains in *Scenes of Infancy*, by Dr John Leyden, who was one of those who shared with Sir Walter Scott in the work of *The Minstrelsy*, in which appeared his ballads *The Mermaid* and *The Coot of Keeldar.* He contributed a large part of the information which was worked up into the dissertation on the fairy-lore prefixed to the *Ballad of Young Tamlane.* His abilities won him the friendships of Henry Mackenzie, Thomas Campbell, Murray the renowned Orientalist, and Thomas Brown the philosopher, Ritson, the Duchess of Gordon, and Heber who introduced him to Scott.

1775-1811.

Scott acknowledged most heartily his indebtedness to the indefatigable labours of this enthusiastic student, with whom miles were accounted as nothing if only a scrap of an ancient ballad lay at the end of a weary day's journey. He was a Roxburghshire man, who faced life's adverse circumstances with as tough and obstinate a courage as any moss-trooper that ever fought his way through a wall of foemen in the dark. That way he won achievement as a scholar, and especially in languages, including Hebrew, Arabic, and Persian. His father's cottage was too small a

place for the exercise of his experiments, so a cove in a glen became his laboratory, and the old Church of Cavers his study, despite the tales of ghost and warlock that kept it secure from the interruption of rustic curiosity. Accompanying the sons of Campbell of Fairfield to St Andrews University, he there extended his knowledge of Oriental languages and literature, and worked at translations in verse, which appeared in the *Edinburgh Magazine*. In that year he went with two German students on a tour through the Highlands, and was impressed in favour of the genuineness of an Ossianic tradition.

Ordained as a minister in 1800, he continued his labours, and not only helped Scott in his *Minstrelsy*, but contributed to "Monk" Lewis's *Tales of Wonder*. In order to get to the East by the only avenue that offered—namely, the post of surgeon's assistant in the Navy—he in a few months qualified himself, and was appointed to a Government position at Madras. He completed his *Scenes of Infancy*, and bade farewell to his native land for ever. He became a judge at Calcutta. In the expedition to Java he contracted a virulent fever, which in three days carried him to his grave. He was only thirty-six years old when he died. Scott wrote to his memory in the fourth canto of *The Lord of the Isles*:

> "Quenched is his lamp of varied lore,
> That loved the light of song to pour;
> A distant and a deadly shore
> Holds Leyden's cold remains."

He also wrote a most appreciative memoir of the dead poet in the *Edinburgh Annual Register* of 1811.

The romantic reminiscences of aged people in his native district filled Leyden's heart with an ineffaceable affection for ballad verse and ancient lore. In his *Scenes of Infancy* he says:

> "The woodland's sombre shade that peasants fear,
> The haunted mountain streams that murmur'd near,
> The antique tomb-stone and the churchyard green,
> Seem'd to unite me with the world unseen:
> Oft when the eastern moon rose darkly red,
> I heard the viewless paces of the dead,
> Heard in the breeze the wandering spirits sigh,
> Or airy skirts unseen, that rustled by."

He seemed to have upon him the haunting certainty of the long farewell, and in his poem he refers to it:

"The silver moon, at midnight cold and still,
Looks, sad and silent, o'er yon western hill;
While large and pale the ghostly structures grow
Rear'd on the confines of the world below.
Is that dull sound the hum of Teviot's stream?
Is that blue light the moon's, or tomb-fire's gleam,
By which a mouldering pile is faintly seen,
The old deserted church at Hazeldean,
Where slept my fathers in their natal clay,
Till Teviot's waters roll'd their bones away?
Their feeble voices from the stream they raise,—
'Rash youth! unmindful of thy early days,
Why didst thou quit the peasant's simple lot?
Why didst thou leave the peasant's turf-built cot,
The ancient graves, where all thy fathers lie,
And Teviot's stream that long has murmur'd by?
And we—when Death so long has closed our eyes,
How wilt thou bid us from the dust arise,
And bear our mouldering bones across the main,
From vales, that knew our lives devoid of stain;
Rash youth! beware, thy home-bred virtues save,
And sweetly sleep in thy paternal grave!'"

An original ruggedly characteristic Border Scot, his excelling talents, touching the edge-limit of genius, gave him a niche of his own, and his name is remembered lovingly, though his works may be said to be forgotten.

CHAPTER XXV

WOMEN'S VOICES

THE eighteenth century was somewhat notable for the emergence of a little band of women among the "makkars" in Scotland. In this Scotland was somewhat unique at the time.

Lady Grizel Baillie occupies a small place in Scottish poetry, and yet she can never be forgotten, not only because of the charm of her exquisite ballad *Werena my Heart Licht I wad Dee*, but also on account of her romantic devotion to her father, Sir Patrick Hume of Marchmont, whose family already figured in Scottish poetry. In the dire times when the Presbyterians often sat in the dark, with death beside them, for the sake of Kirk and Covenant, she hid her father in the family burying-place at Polwarth Kirk. He was under suspicion of connection with the Ryehouse Plot. She managed artfully, under the very noses of those who were hunting for him, to convey food to his place of hiding. She dug a shelter for him under the floor of the house, until he and his family of twelve children were able to flee to Holland. What it all meant to a child of the period to creep in the gloom with the ghostly superstitions grabbing at her skirts as she went through the graveyard to stay in the mirk with her father, in the terrible solitude of the charnel-house, can scarce be understood by us to-day. Their poverty in Holland was indescribable, until the day of freedom and restoration came with the landing of William of Orange in Britain. Lady Grizel was then able to marry Baillie of Jerviswoode, the man she loved, and who also had been, for his religious and political opinions, under the same cloud that enveloped her own family. His father had been, in 1685, captured, and had suffered the death penalty. She had written down, for the comforting of her heart, many little lyrics in Holland, but of those only the song just mentioned, along with two verses, *The Ewe-Buchtin's Bonny*,

1665-1746.

are worth remembering. The former appeared in Ramsay's *Tea-Table Miscellany*, and in the *Orpheus Caledonius*. About it there is an added pathos through its application by the poet Burns to his own sad case, when the clouds hung heavy over his life, near the end of his tragedy in Dumfries.

"His bannet stood aye fu' round on his brow—
His auld ane looked aye as weel as some's new;
But now he lets 't wear ony gate it will hing,
And casts himsel' dowie upon the corn-bing.

"And now he gaes drooping about the dykes,
And a' he dow do is to hund the tykes;
The live-lang nicht he ne'er steeks his e'e;
And werena my heart licht I wad dee.

"Were I young for thee as I ha'e been
We should ha'e been gallopin' doun on yon green,
And linkin' it on the lily-white lea;
And wow gin I were but young for thee!"

The *Ewe-Buchtin'* has the same sigh running through it. It is an exquisite pastoral cameo. Her lines are notable for the beat of human pathos which is in them:

"The ewe-buchtin's bonnie, baith e'enin' and morn,
When our blithe shepherds play on the bog-reed and horn;
While we're milking, they're lilting, baith pleasant and clear;
But my heart's like to break when I think on my dear.

"O the shepherds take pleasure to blow on the horn,
To raise up their flocks o' sheep soon i' the morn;
On the bonnie green banks they feed pleasant and free;
But alas, my dear heart, all my sighing's for thee!"

A lady whose name figures very prominently in the discussion over the origin of the ballads was Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Charles Halket of Pitfirrane, who married in 1696 Sir Henry Wardlaw of Pitreavie. Robert Chambers devoted much labour to prove that this lady was the author of more than a score of the most notable ballads of Scotland, and attributed to her the masterpiece of *Sir Patrick Spens*. His arguments were abandoned as inconclusive, even by himself.[1] It seems undoubted that the ballad fragment *Hardyknute* came from her pen. It was issued by Watson of Edinburgh in 1719, and Lady Wardlaw asserted that it had been discovered by her on some scraps of paper used for weaving-clews. Men were romantic enough to

1677-1727.

[1] *See* Professor Masson's *Edinburgh Sketches and Memories*.

accept anything in regard to old-world verse, and the piece was included in Ramsay's *Evergreen* as being among the poems written "before 1600." It owed to Ramsay many alterations in the matter of spelling, according to his own ideas of what ancient orthography should be. It was accepted as a narrative of the battle of Largs in 1263, by a contemporary minstrel; but in 1767, owing to doubts which had arisen, Lady Wardlaw acknowledged that she had written it herself, and she further added two stanzas to conclude the ballad. Pinkerton, however, in his *Scottish Tragic Ballads* issued in 1781, went one better. He was notable for girding at the unscrupulousness of other editors, but while he got his readers to bow their assent to his sweeping condemnations, he took opportunity of their attention being diverted to perpetrate as huge forgeries himself as he attributed to others. He published a version of the ballad, with a considerable addition, declaring that he had received it from the repetition of a lady in Lanarkshire, but, with characteristic audacity, in 1783[1] and 1786,[2] he acknowledged that the second part had been written by himself, a brazen acknowledgment of impudent fraud. He went still further, and asserted that Sir John Bruce of Kinross had declared that he had found the manuscript in a vault at Dunfermline, and that on his suggestion Lady Wardlaw had "mothered" the poem. Bishop Percy accepted this as fact in the edition of the *Reliques* in 1794, although in the second edition of 1767 he had spoken of the virtual acknowledgment of the authorship by Lady Wardlaw. He was followed in this by others, though on what ground it is difficult to say, for two lies discovered should never be taken as an authority for accepting a third statement from the same source. In 1830, however, from Pinkerton's own correspondence, the third statement was found to have been as unveracious as the former ones; and, on the strength of a letter from Lord Hailes, discovered in Pinkerton's papers, the authority of Lady Wardlaw was accepted. Lady Wardlaw's daughter also clearly stated that her mother had written the ballad. In was praised by Gray and Irving, and by Sir Walter Scott, who wrote:

"Hardyknute was the first poem I ever learnt, and the last I shall ever forget."

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[1] *Scottish Ballads.* [2] *Ancient Scottish Poems.*

Whether Lady Wardlaw's own assertion arose from the mock modesty of the period, which considered it probably a thing uncommendable in a lady of fashion to stoop to writing verse, or was simply the product of a love of mystery treading very closely on the verge of dishonesty, it is perhaps kindest not to attempt to decide. To-day, looking through the ballad, one cannot help wondering at its being accepted as an ancient production, with its "Lord Chattan" and its "King of Norse," and its voice and tone so different from the genuine lilt.

In the ballad we find a hint which perhaps drew David Laing and Robert Chambers after the will-o-the-wisp of Lady Wardlaw's authorship of *Sir Patrick Spens*:

> "On Norway's coast the widowed dame
> May wash the rocks with tears—
> May lang look o'er the shipless seas
> Before her mate appears.
> Cease, Emma, cease to hope in vain;
> Thy lord lies in the clay:
> The valiant Scots nae reivers thole
> To carry life away."

An interesting member of the literary galaxy of the eighteenth century was Alison Rutherford, who married Patrick Cockburn of Ormiston. Her wit and cleverness drew to her circle the best minds in Edinburgh. It was while she was still Alison Rutherford that she wrote anonymously the song which preserves her name for ever, *The Flowers of the Forest*, ostensibly a lament for the Selkirk men who fled at Flodden. So uncritical was the period, and so ready for wonder, that when it was first published it was at once taken to be contemporary with the disaster. Burns, however, declared what it truly was, and Sir Walter Scott himself was able not only to set all dubiety about authorship at rest, but to give an account of the occasion on which it was composed. Unfortunately that was a much more prosaic thing than Flodden, Alison Rutherford having in her mind the financial failure of seven lairds in the Border district, who were the "Flowers of the Forest." It was a shame to have written that statement, and notwithstanding Sir Walter's assertion, the heart of Scotland, remembering who the real "Flowers of the Forest" were—namely, the brave band of Border spearmen who had fallen

1712-1794.

round the king on Flodden's fatal ridge—has never ceased to see within those verses, wedded to exquisite melody, a wider application than its author knew.

A far finer piece of work, with the ancient spirit and the true atmosphere about it, was that ballad with the same title, composed by Miss Jean Elliot, third daughter of Sir Gilbert Elliot. The author of *My Sheep I Neglected* was her brother. It is remarkable that, so far as is known, she was the authoress of only this one song. It was in the year 1756, riding home with her brother after dinner. The story of Flodden had been spoken of, and the refrain of an old lament for the brave who had fallen there had been quoted. Ruminating imaginatively over the subject, a chance remark of Sir Gilbert crystallized the sentiment upon the ancient phrase, and in her heart, as the carriage moved on through the dark, the music of the beautiful dirge formed itself into words. The melody is an old pastoral strain which was loved by the people, and was associated with the tragic and heroic event. The first line and the refrain are ancient. One hears the echo of them in Grizel Baillie's *Ewe-Buchtin'*. Herd, in his collection, threw Mrs Cockburn's song into this ballad, and published both as one ancient composition, which proved his critical incapacity, for the one is a drawing-room song and the other a lament full of pastoral melancholy, fit to be sung by sheepcotes in the glens : 1727-1805.

> "I've heard them lilting at the ewe-milking,
> Lasses a-lilting before the dawn of day ;
> But now there is moaning in ilka green loaning,
> The flowers o' the forest are a' wede away."

It is ineffably superior to that which is now more popular. Her brother said truly, when he heard it, "that Scotland had gained a ballad which would never die." It is a great loss to Scottish people that this beautiful composition, so characteristically national, has dropped out of popularity, and almost out of knowledge.

Isobel Pagan is perhaps more interesting than the fashionable ladies who wrote ballads to stir the emotions of Edinburgh drawing-rooms. She lived a loose life. She had neither beauty of person nor refinement of mind, and her only contact with education was through the fact 1741-1821.

that she served the better-off people of the district in her home of Muirkirk, Ayrshire, with whisky which had never interviewed the exciseman. Yet this curious character wrote the immortal *Ca' the Yowes to the Knowes*:

"Ca' the yowes to the knowes—
Ca' them whare the heather grows—
Ca' them whare the burnie rows,
My bonnie dearie!"

The song as it is known to us to-day was, with the exception of the first verse, re-written by Burns; nevertheless, the original is fine, and wonderfully direct. She has another song, *The Crook and Plaid*, which has suggested more versions than one, and is still worthy of a place of its own:

"Ilk lassie has a laddie she lo'es abune the rest,
Ilk lassie has a laddie, if she like to confess 't,
That is dear unto her bosom, whatever be his trade;
But my lover's aye the laddie that wears the crook and plaid.

"Ilk morn he climbs the mountains, his fleecy flocks to view,
And hears the laverocks chanting, new sprang frae 'mang the dew;
His bonnie wee bit doggie, sae frolicsome and glad,
Rins aye before the laddie that wears the crook and plaid."

Jean Glover is a kind of counter-part of Isobel Pagan. Burns met her, and tells us that at that time she was strolling through the country "with a sleight-of-hand blackguard." She seems to have been of a respectable family in Kilmarnock. Strangely handsome, she had within her a romantic touch which made her run away with some wandering players. The rest of her story until Burns met her is, perhaps fortunately, not known. She was seen at Irvine at a fair, beating a tambourine, at the mouth of a "pend," and trying to draw people to the place where her husband was to perform some conjuring tricks. Her song *O'er the Muir amang the Heather* was taken down by Burns from her singing.

1758-1801.

There is no doubt that, had it not been for the fact that Michael Haydn had set some of her songs to his music, the name of Mrs Hunter, whose husband was the celebrated surgeon, would have long since found absolute oblivion. But one, at least, of them, and for the very reason urged, is still familiar:

1741-1821.

"My mother bids me bind my hair
With bands of rosy hue,
Tie up my sleeves with ribbons rare,
And lace my boddice blue.

"'For why,' she cries, 'sit still and weep,
While others dance and play?'
Alas! I scarce can go or creep
While Lubin is away."

Mrs Grant of Carron, frequently confused with Mrs Grant of Laggan, gave a very good song indeed to her country when she wrote *Roy's Wife of Aldivalloch.* 1745-1814. Roy of Aldivalloch, in the Cabrach, would otherwise have long been forgotten.

Mrs Grant of Laggan was the daughter of a Highland officer who, after the conquest of Canada, settled in America, but, having to return to Scotland in 1768, lost his property through the American War of Independence, and was glad to linger out his days as barrack-master at Fort Augustus. 1755-1838. Anne MacVicar married James Grant, the garrison chaplain, who afterwards became minister of Laggan. Her husband's death left her in poverty with eight children, but she was of a stout heart, and publishing by subscription *The Highlander* and other poems, she wiped out her obligations, and removed finally to Edinburgh, there devoting herself to literature. She is remembered by her volume of *Letters from the Mountains*, which, issued in 1806, was republished recently. Lord Jeffrey, Henry Mackenzie, author of *The Man of Feeling*, and Sir Walter Scott, were amongst the friends her genius drew about her. Her knowledge of the Highlands and of Highland tradition and habits was unique, and for a time *Waverley* and *Rob Roy* were attributed to her. Her simple ballad, set to the popular melody of *The Bluebells of Scotland*, is just such a song as might have been written by a soldier's daughter and by a minister's wife, for it gives a description of a Highland warrior pretty much in the form suggested by the Shorter Catechism:

"'O where, tell me where, is your Highland laddie gone?
O where tell me where, is your Highland laddie gone?'
'He's gone, with streaming banners, where noble deeds are done!
And my sad heart will tremble till he comes safely home.'"

It proceeds in the same way to discover the Highland laddie's

residence and the kind of clothes he wears. It was extremely popular, and is still sung in schools.

Her long poem, *The Highlanders*, brought into touch with the imagination of the Lowlands the spirit of the mountain race, their habits and their life, and the romance of ancient days, fast passing away for ever. She thus prepared the way for the poetic spell of Sir Walter Scott. It contains some descriptive passages of genuine interest:

"Now *Winter* pours his terrors o'er the plain,
And icy barriers close the wild domain,
From the fierce North the sweeping blast descends,
And drifted snow in wild confusion blends;
The Mountain-cataract whose thundering sound,
Made echoes tremble in their caves around,
Now dashing with diminish'd majesty,
In frozen state suspended seems on high;
While in the midst a small contracted stream
Tinkles like rills that lull the shepherd's dream.
The River crusted o'er, and hid in snow,
Unfaithful tempts the traveller below;
While pools and boiling springs, unsafe beneath,
Betray th' unwary to the snares of death.
How awful now appears Night's silent reign!
Where lofty mountains bound the solemn scene,
While Nature, wrapt in chilly bright disguise,
And sunk in deep repose unconscious lies;
And through the pure cerulean vault above,
In lucid order constellations move:
The milky-way, conspicuous glows on high.
Redoubled lustre sparkles thro' the sky;
And rapid splendours, from the dark-blue North,
In streams of brightness pour incessant forth;
While crusted mountain-snows reflect the light,
And radiance decks the sable brows of night."

The life in the summer shielings, the memories of the saga of Prince Charles, the wail of the emigrants leaving their native straths, and the questioning of the future of the mountain race speak through her verses.

The rest of her work is merely occasional—verses "with a pair of garters wrought by a Highland woman aged one hundred and one," or "with a sprig of crimson heath which grew on the summit of a mountain."

The influences of Thomson and Pope were stamped all over her work, which is now long since forgotten.

A very sweet immortality falls to the lot of Lady Ann Barnard, daughter of the fifth Earl of Balcarres, on account of her ballad *Auld Robin Gray*. As was the fashion of her time, she covered up her tracks from popular discovery, and for a while her connection with the song was kept a profound secret. It was even attributed to David Rizzio, on whose shoulders was laid the paternity of so much of the wandering offspring of Scottish song. The ancient origin claimed for it was, however, for a long while felt to be open to suspicion, but it was only a short time before her death that Lady Ann acknowledged her authorship. She married, when she was forty-three, Mr Barnard, who became Colonial Secretary to the Government at Cape Town. It was unfortunate that she felt impelled at a later day to narrate the prosaic circumstances and method of composition of the ballad, and also that she wrote a sequel in which she killed "Auld Robin Gray" and married "young Jamie" to the widow. The melody to which the song was composed was an old one with words about which clung the taint of earlier times; but that to which it is now sung was written by an English rector, and is only to be accounted Scottish because now exquisitely and for ever wedded to Lady Ann's words. 1750-1825.

Elizabeth Hamilton, whose "Mrs M'Clarty," the lazy woman of her *Cottagers of Glenburnie*, is familiarly known to many who never heard of the book itself, was the author of one other literary composition in the song, *My Ain Fireside*, which is characterized more by sentiment than by poetry. 1748-1816.

The song *And Ye shall walk in Silk Attire*, though written in the Scottish dialect, was composed by Susanna Blamire, and is entitled to a place in Scottish poetry, though its authoress is not a Scottish poetess, either by blood or birth. She styled herself "the Muse of Cumberland," and her Scottish connection came in 1767, through her sister's marriage with Graham of Gartmore. It is only by her Scottish verses that she is remembered at all. 1747-1794.

Of all the Scottish ladies who have written verse, Caroline Oliphant, better known as Lady Nairne, is undoubtedly the laureate. National love and yearning, the glamour of the bare hills, the pathos of the failure of romantic effort, the love of home, the piteousness of empty rooms 1766-1845.

and silent stairs; these are the phases which, through her songs, make constant appeal to the heart. Her peculiar possession is tenderness combined with a buoyancy which gives her music a unique lift and throb.

She was a typical Scottish lady of her time. Born in 1766, in Gask, one of the oldest houses in Scotland, encrusted with traditional memories, a score of dreams of national reminiscences and old-world emotions would move about her heart and flow about her feet. It is not a long arch that stretches over a couple of generations. It was only twenty years since the piping and marching of the clans had broken across the Borders into England, with Prince Charlie, the hope of the Stewarts, riding at their head, the chiefs of many an ancient house risking everything for the sake of the love they bore to the name of the native kings. And now they had tasted exile, dispossession, and absolute impoverishment.

The family of Lady Nairne, the Oliphants, were amongst the most ancient in Scotland. Their possessions ranged over several counties, from far remote northern Caithness to the Lothians. The first of them whose name is quoted by history, saved the life of King David of Scotland, at the siege of Winchester in 1142. They gave liberally of their possessions to the great monasteries on Tweedside. One of them was Justiciary of Lothian, and through his marriage to a daughter of the Earl of Stathearn about the year 1200, the Oliphants entered Perthshire. Again, when Scotland lay groaning under Edward I., and all were in despair of her ancient liberties, it was an Oliphant who kept the rampant lion flying on Stirling Castle, and with it kept alive the hopes of his country. The son of this brave man married a daughter of King Robert the Bruce. Their lands of Gask were erected into a barony in 1364. A peerage was given to the family in 1468. Favoured by the king, their hearts beat loyally in faithful service. When the melancholy stars rose over Flodden Field, where the flower of the knighthood and chivalry lay deadly stricken, amongst the rest lay Colin, the Master of Oliphant, with his brother Laurence, the Abbot of Inchaffray. From the sons of this Colin, dead in that devoted ring round their monarch, sprang the Lords Oliphant, the fifth of whom, base and unworthy, spendthrift and selfish, succeeding in 1593, flung away like chaff the best of the family property in Perthshire, Caithness, Fife,

Forfar, Haddington, and Kincardine. Lords without land, they lingered on penniless, with long pedigrees, till the last of them died in 1751, and the headship of the family fell upon the Gask line.

These sprang from the second son of the Flodden chief, whose third descendant bought from the spendthrift lord some of his Perthshire lands, which he got erected into the barony of Gask. The laird of the time, with much of the pawkiness that distinguished his class and kind, remained at home in the "Auld Hoose" in 1715, though his son took the field under the Earl of Mar. This same son, Laurence Oliphant, took the field again in 1745, when Bonnie Prince Charlie, the son of "Righ Seumas," came over the water to claim his father's throne. He was made governor of Perth, while his son and namesake Laurence was one of the aides-de-camp of the Prince, on the memorable march to Derby. How they were moved may be truly seen from Lady Nairne's :

"He's owre the hills that I lo'e weel,
He's owre the hills we daurna name ;
He's owre the hills ayont Dunblane,
Wha soon will get his welcome hame.

"My faither's gane to fecht for him,
My brithers winna bide at hame,
My mither greets and prays for them,
And deed she thinks they're no to blame."

This Laurence Oliphant the younger became the father of Lady Nairne, the sweet singer of the fortunes of the Jacobite cause, and of the simple domesticities of Scottish life.

The father and grandfather of Lady Nairne, like so many others at the same time, lurked about in hiding in Buchan, then somehow escaped to Sweden, and managed to reach France. They lived in exile for seventeen years. Their estate, considerably diminished, was bought back in 1753 by their kinsmen for sixteen thousand pounds, and ten years later they were allowed to return to the "Auld Hoose." The old man only lived four years longer, but his granddaughter embalmed his memory in her exquisite lines, where he lives for ever as

"The Auld Laird, sae canty, kind and crouse."

The old laird's son had married in France the daughter

of Duncan Robertson of Strowan, the chief of Clan Donachie, a genial big Highland poet, whose wife had been sister of Lady Gask, and both of them daughters of that Lord Nairne who had very nearly lost his head for the rebellion of 1715. Their daughter, the future Lady Nairne, was called Carolina, after Charles Edward. Everything, therefore, that heredity and tradition could do made her a Jacobite to whom the memories of the past were like the wine of life. There could not have been a more Jacobite house. In the very prayer books which were used the names of the exiled Stewarts were pasted over those of the German Lairdie and his family. Surrounded by her Jacobite kin, the Grahams, the Robertsons, Murrays, and Drummonds, she was fed on the stories of the old Stewart days. She heard her father tell how he had supped with Prince Charlie at Blair Castle, how he had galloped into Edinburgh with the news of Prestonpans. He would recall how the Prince spoke a few words to him after all was lost at Culloden, and what sufferings had been his in his exile for the king. The old man devoted himself to gathering relics, which he kept like holy things in Gask, such as Prince Charlie's bonnet, his cockade, crucifix, and a lock of his yellow hair, that had waved so bonnily when he led the clansmen over the Esk into England with his "Hundred Pipers." Her verses on this episode have the living swing and clang of the march-past of a fearless host:

"Wi' a hundred pipers an' a', an' a',
Wi' a hundred pipers an' a', an' a',
We'll up an' gie them a blaw, a blaw,
Wi' a hundred pipers an' a', an' a'.

"The Esk was swollen, sae red and sae deep,
But shouther to shouther the brave lads keep;
Twa thousand swam owre to fell English ground,
An' danced themselves dry to the pibroch's sound.
Dumfounder'd the English saw—they saw—
Dumfounder'd they heard the blaw, the blaw;
Dumfounder'd they a' ran awa', awa',
From the hundred pipers an' a', an' a'."

At Gask Episcopalian services were conducted by a clergyman who had not taken the oath of allegiance to the strangers that sat upon the throne of the Stewarts. And though when Prince Charlie died, and the last hope of the Jacobites was extinguished, a great many, seeing the futility

of further resistance, took the oath, the old laird held out. Even when he got the papers read to him in his later years, if George III. were mentioned in them, with his queen, the reader had always to refer to them as "the K. and Q." Tidings of the sturdy Jacobitism of brave old Gask having been carried to George III., a message was sent by him through the Member of Parliament for Perthshire:

"Give my compliments—not the compliments of the King of England, but those of the Elector of Hanover,—to Mr Oliphant, and tell him how much I respect him for the steadiness of his principles."

He was the last of the old cavaliers who held to the three great troths—faithfulness to his king, to his comrades, and to his God.

"The Auld Hoose," in which Lady Nairne was born, was a quaint turreted and gabled structure, every room of which must have been haunted with ancient memories. It was pulled down in 1801, but nothing could ever take the place of such an abode of memories and romance in the sensitive soul of the poetess. Her song of remembrance has still unfading mastery over Scottish hearts everywhere:

"Oh, the auld hoose, the auld hoose!
What tho' the rooms were wee?
Oh, kind hearts were dwelling there,
And bairnies fu' o' glee!
The wild rose and the jessamine
Still hang upon the wa':
How mony cherish'd memories
Do they sweet flowers reca'?

"Oh, the auld laird, the auld laird,
Sae canty, kind, and crouse!
How mony did he welcome to
His ain wee dear auld hoose!
And the leddy too, sae genty,
That shelter'd Scotland's heir;
And clipt a lock wi' her ain hand
Frae his lang yellow hair."

She moved among her own people, rich and poor alike, with an open heart, and an observant eye. She knew all the intervals between the great sorrows and the gay laughters.

Along the line of humorous characterization we see such

an immortal picture as the wooing of the Laird of Cockpen. But Caroline Oliphant had more than mere humour in her mind when she wrote that immortal ballad. She had been much struck by the work of an Ayrshire ploughman, Robert Burns, and especially was she interested in his labour of purifying the song literature of Scotland. She had observed at a fair how greedily farm servants and farmers bought up a little book of songs which was being hawked about the market; and having secured a copy she was unspeakably vexed to note the character of its contents. So she determined that she would write something of a purer kind to be wedded to the old melodies.

The melody to which she wrote *The Laird o' Cockpen* was in the same category. It was one of the greatest favourites in the country, and was known as *When she cam' ben she bobbit fu' low*. The old version was entitled *Cockpen*, and was often sung for the sake of its tune, though the words were, in the matter of morality, considerably below par. It was supposed to be as old as the time of Charles II., and was connected with the fortunes of Mark Carss, the Laird of Cockpen, who was a favourite of the "merrie monarch," and who shared the exile of his king when that Sovereign was outcast from his throne, after the battle of Worcester. While in Holland he often amused Charles by his rough wit, and especially by his skill in Scottish music. He particularly excelled in playing the king's favourite, *When she cam' ben she bobbit fu' low*. So enamoured was the king with this melody that Carss had to lull him to sleep with it, and wake him in the morning with it. After the Restoration, when Charles got back to his own throne, Carss found that his devotion to the king had cost him his lands. And he made the further mortifying discovery that he had suffered for an ungrateful prince, who paid no attention to any petitions or appeals made to him for the restoration of his inheritance. Charles even refused to see him when he visited London. So he won back his own by a clever ruse. Having carefully cultivated the friendship of the organist of the Chapel Royal, he got permission to play the services one day when the king was present. And instead of the usual postlude he struck up Charles's favourite melody. The king at once made his way to the organ gallery, and discovering Cockpen, said: "Man, Mark, you almost made me dance." "'Deed, your

majesty," replied the laird, "I would dance mysel' if I only had my ain lands back again." Carried away by the influence of the music he loved, the king could not resist the entreaty, and the laird got back his lands beside the singing Esk.

The Laird in Caroline Oliphant's song is a creation; but he is a true creation. The old fellow suddenly wakes up to find that he has missed something in life. And convinced that a fair lady at the head of his table would make up for the deficiency, he looks around and finds, to his astonishment, not far from him one who, like himself, has missed the mark of matrimony. While he had been content with his horses and his dogs and his after-dinner snooze, she had been satisfied with the homely duties of a Scottish lady of her time, making the elder-flower wine and keeping the household in order. It was true she had not much money, but she had the true blood, blue with the cold length of the journey which it had flowed, and what she lacked in lands and cash the laird could well supply. But even lairds may find there are always two sides to a story.

"The Laird o' Cockpen, he's proud an' he's great,
His mind is ta'en up wi' things o' the State:
He wanted a wife, his braw hoose to keep;
But favour wi' wooin' was fashous to seek.

"Down by the dyke-side a lady did dwell;
At his table-head he thought she'd look well—
M'Clish's ae daughter o' Claverse-ha' Lee,
A penniless lass wi' a lang pedigree.

"His wig was weel pouther'd and as gude as new;
His waistcoat was white, and his coat it was blue:
He put on a ring, a sword, and cock'd hat—
And wha could refuse the Laird wi' a' that?

"He took the grey mare, and rade cannily,
An' rapp'd at the yett o' Claverse-ha' Lee:
'Gae tell Mistress Jean to come speedily ben—
She's wanted to speak wi' the Laird o' Cockpen.'

"Mistress Jean was makin' the elder-flower wine:
'And what brings the Laird at sic a like time?'
She put aff her apron and on her silk goun,
Her mutch wi' red ribbons, and gaed awa doun.

"An' when she cam' ben he bow'd fu' low;
An' what was his errand he soon let her know.
Amazed was the Laird when the lady said 'Na';—
And wi' a laigh curtsie she turned awa'.

"Dumfounder'd was he; nae sigh did he gie,
He mounted his mare—he rade cannily;
And aften he thought, as he gaed through the glen,
'She's daft to refuse the Laird o' Cockpen!'"

It is to this period that the most of her Jacobite songs belong. The charm of her Jacobitism is that it is as truly her own as is her very heart's blood, as when, in *The White Rose of June*, she says:

"It's no on my breast, nor yet in my hair,
That the emblem dear I venture to wear;
But it blooms in my heart, and its white leaves I weet
When alane in the gloaming I wander to greet
O'er the white rose, the white rose, the white rose o' June,
An' may he that should wear it come back again sune!"

But Caroline Oliphant was soon to step out from the narrow environment of her quiet home into the great wide world, and to take her place amongst the women of her country. On the threshold two events of deep influence in her life had occurred. The one was the offer of the hand of a royal duke, which she refused; the daughter of a man who had suffered for the "true blue" could not have thought of any other course. The other, of far greater moment than twenty royal dukes, was the composition of *The Land o' the Leal*. Following on a curious slip of Mr Gladstone, a recent novelist wrote a book which has misled many Englishmen and many un-Scottish Scots people as to the meaning of the phrase. "The Land o' the Leal" does not mean Scotland, although lealty has marked out our race above all for devotion to lost causes. It is rather the land where true hearts dwell for ever in the perfect light of love. This song can never die. It is wailed by the bagpipes at the funerals of the Scottish soldier. And wherever men and women have sorrow, the simple pellucid words will drop like balm into the wounded heart. As with her other songs, the secret of its composition was well kept. It has been attributed to Burns. She herself had the experience of hearing its authorship being discussed in her presence. It had its origin in her sympathy for a dear friend whose only child had been taken away out of the shadows to the "Land o' the Leal," yonder.

"I'm wearin' awa', John,
Like snaw-wreaths in thaw, John,
I'm wearin' awa'
To the land o' the leal.
There's nae sorrow there, John,
There's neither cauld nor care, John,
The day is aye fair
In the land o' the leal."

She was now preparing for her marriage with Major Nairne, who represented the attainted family which had been ruined through their devotion to the Stewarts. She was at the turning-point in her mental life. In Edinburgh she mingled in society, and became a favourite amongst all who loved quiet humour and the history of the native country. To this period belongs *Caller Herrin'*. The words were undoubtedly suggested to her by the sight of an Edinburgh market, the busy bustle of the crowd, the pawky pleading, and scornful sarcasm of the Newhaven fishwives, with their musical cry rising above the bustle. The air was written by Nathaniel Gow, the son of the famous Neil the fiddler, and is said to have been suggested to him by hearing a fishwife's cry of "Caller Herrin'" mingling with the chimes of St Andrew's Church. It is one of the truest songs of brave labour that the world of toil knows:

"Wha'll buy my caller herrin'
They're bonnie fish and halesome farin';
Wha'll buy my caller herrin'
New drawn frae the Forth?

"When ye were sleeping on your pillows,
Dream'd ye aught o' our puir fellows,
Darkling as they faced the billows,
A' to fill our woven willows?

"Wha'll buy my caller herrin'?
Oh, ye may ca' them vulgar farin',
Wives and mithers maist despairin',
Ca' them lives o' men."

At this time also she remembered old scenes and recalled old gatherings in the garden at Gask, and sang of them in *The Rowan Tree.*

In Edinburgh, in the society in which she moved, interested in history and literature, she still preserved her *incognito.* The songs which were being sung, praised, and beloved in her presence, and which had come out of her

own heart, were most of them supposed to be written by Mrs Bogan of Bogan, an old lady who had supplied many of them to *The Scottish Minstrel*, which was being published by Purdie the music-seller.

The Crown now granted to Major and Mrs Nairne the royal apartments in Holyrood, where for some years they resided. It was very remarkable that at this time it was quite a fashion to write anonymously The mystery of the *Waverley Novels* had not been unveiled. That feeling of mystery got into literature ; all the little fishes imitated the whales ; and ballads and romances of noble lords in disguise wooing peasant maidens became the vogue. Such a story is told in Lady Nairne's *Huntingtower*.

In 1822, when George IV. visited Scotland, Major and Mrs Nairne had, of course, to leave Holyrood, but they received in place of the rooms they had there an annuity of three hundred pounds. Two years later the title and estates were restored to the Nairnes, and Caroline Oliphant, Lady Nairne, became known henceforth by the name dear to those who love our country's literature.

It is largely through her beautiful utterances that the glamour of the Stewarts' ancient name, and the memory of the brave who, for their sakes fought and fell, giving of their best for loyalty, still survive, and especially that glorious figure of the Prince himself, ere the dark days, bitter with dishonour, crept across his name and fame to him, with the drunkard's grave in Rome. It is through her singing that his memory still wakes yearning in our Scottish hearts, setting us towards the olden times, and making us still cry over the graves and over the generations—" Will ye no' come back again ? "

Joanna Baillie, daughter of a Scottish clergyman, was born in the manse of Bothwell. She suffered in her early life from the repression of all emotion and the cold austerity of her father, who belonged to the severe school of Scottish ecclesiastics. The romantic passion which was expressed in her verse was the reaction from her youthful experiences. She is little remembered now. Yet Walter Scott called her the " immortal Joanna," and loved her dramas. He said :

1762-1851.

" If you wish to speak of a real poet, Joanna Baillie is now the highest genius of our country."

And Washington Irving wrote of her as :

"The most gifted of the tuneful sisterhood of Scotland."

These are strange-sounding phrases in our ears to-day, and a lesson on the value of contemporary renown.

In her thirty-sixth year she issued the first volume of her plays delineating the passions, "each passion being the subject of a tragedy and a comedy." In her introduction to this volume she struck a note which was taken up later on by William Wordsworth, in a plea for the expression of the simple traits of the human heart and poesy without undecorated feeling. In 1802 and 1812 a second and third volume appeared, but in 1804 came from her pen a volume of dramas dealing with miscellaneous topics, and in 1810 her *Family Legend*, which achieved considerable success on the Edinburgh stage. Three more volumes of plays completed her dramatic utterance. Her *De Montfort* was brought out by Kemble, and again by Kean. Her plays, however, suffered from her theory of the necessity of depicting a single passion in each tragedy, her dramas being devoid of incident. As Campbell says in his *Life of Mrs Siddons* :

"The passions in her main characters proceeded from the wilful natures of the beings themselves. Their feelings are not precipitated by circumstances like a stream down a declivity, that leaps from rock to rock ; but, for want of incident, they seem often like water on a level, without a propelling impulse."

Her tragedies have been compared to Shirley's and Massinger's; but the comparison would not be made to-day.

No person of her day was looked upon with deeper affectionate regard, or enjoyed more wide and noble friendships. Finer than anything in her plays, and with a greater ring of human truth in it, is her *Shepherd's Song* :

"The gowan glitters on the sward,
The lav'rock's in the sky,
And Collie on my plaid keeps ward,
And time is passing by.
Oh, no ! sad an' slow !
I hear nae welcome sound ;
The shadow of our trystin' bush,
It wears sae slowly round !

"My sheep-bell tinkles frae the west,
My lambs are bleating near,
But still the sound that I lo'e best,
Alack! I canna hear.
Oh, no! sad an' slow!
The shadow lingers still;
And like a lanely ghaist I stand,
And croon upon the hill.

"I hear below the water roar,
The mill wi' clackin' din;
And Lucky scoldin' frae her door,
To bring the bairnies in.
Oh, no! sad and slow!
These are nae sounds for me;
The shadow of our trystin' bush,
It creeps sae drearily."

Lady John Scott of Spottiswoode in the Merse, who died in 1900, had within her heart the glamour of the olden time. She beautified ancient fragments, and united broken threads of early music. The modern version of *Annie Laurie*; the song of passion and regret which was sung into commonplaceness, *Douglas Tender and True*; and the popular ballad which the barrel organs killed, *The Bonnie Banks o' Loch Lomond*, came from her pen. There is the spirit of Grizel Baillie in such haunting verse as *Durisdeer*:

1801-1900.

"We'll meet nae mair at sunset, when the weary day is dune,
Nor wander hame thegither, by the lee licht o' the mune!
I'll hear your step nae longer amang the dewy corn,
Nor we'll meet nae mair, my bonniest, either at even or morn.

"The yellow broom is waving abune the sunny brae,
And the rowan berries dancing, where the sparkling waters play,
Tho' a' is bright and bonnie, it's an eerie place to me,
For we'll meet nae mair, my dearest, either by burn or tree."

These words become almost pictorial in their sweetness:

"O murmuring waters!
The sounds of the moorlands I hear,
The scream of the hern and the eagle,
The bell of the deer.
The rustling of heather and fern,
The shiver of grass on the lee,
The sigh of the wind from the hill,—
Have ye no voice for me?"

A very sweet link with the past snapped when, through the low gate of a beautiful old age tangled about with exquisite memories of dear companionships, she passed into the silence.

Janet Logie Robertson to-day has much more poetic feeling and sense of mystery in her heart than she has found utterance for.

Scotland is, indeed, waiting for another poetess, when the stream of feminine politics has subsided into contemplative calm, though it is hard to believe that, while a woman's heart still is and ever shall abide as the home of love and sorrow, it should remain voiceless. Perhaps that reticence in regard to deepest feelings, which is largely peculiar to the Scottish nature, finds deepest manifestation in the rarity of feminine utterance in song; at any rate, we have no Scottish poetess, nor signs of any, approaching the volume or content of Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

CHAPTER XXVI

SUPERSTITIONS AND SURVIVALS

The expression of the poesy of Scottish life took a strongly popular form through the belief in a vast fairy world. The flickering lights on the marsh, the cry of the wind among the rocks, or over the face of shingle in the hills, had all to be accounted for, and everything that was unknown, illusory and transitory, could all be so easily interpreted through the intervention of "the little people" Indeed, the simple mind required the fairy world as a background for its life's enigma.

The fairies were usually invisible and unsubstantial, dwelling in underground places, in green knolls of the glens, and among the rocks.

The Gaelic name for them—*sith*, meaning "peace"—seems to point to the silence of their movements. The Lowlander called them "the good people" to propitiate them. Though usually thought of as little folk, they could make themselves any size they liked. Sometimes they carried about them signs which marked them clearly as beings of no natural earthly birth; for example, the want of a nostril, or the peculiarity of a web-foot, or the possession of but one gloomy eye in the forehead. They were a perpetually busy people; but, after all, engrossed in little good, and busy about trifles. Their knolls were always associated with music and dancing; one man here and there would seem to be endowed with the secret of discovery above his fellows, for he had just to put his foot on the edge of the fairy ring alone among the hills, and he would hear the song and laughter, the jingle of the fairy bells, the clang of the dancing people of the glens. Sometimes, attracted by the light and music streaming from the entrance to their dwellings in the green knolls, men have entered and been heartily welcomed. The music was unspeakably sweet, the mirth and laughter beyond all earthly merriment, and the visitors were irresis-

tibly drawn into the giddy dance. All around them the hangings were rich and massive, the carpets of the softest, the vessels of pure gold, the food of the finest ; but sometimes, perhaps by some accidental utterance of the name of God, the charm was suddenly snapped, the rich hangings were seen to be cobwebs, the gold only slates and rubbish, the food only materials of the most disgusting kind ; and the unhappy mortal who was thus disillusioned found himself bruised, or even lamed for life, flung out upon the moor, or moaning at the foot of a cliff. But what was perhaps as remarkable as anything, the time which seemed in the dance to have been only an hour or two was found to have been in reality a matter of years !

To the human beings who partook of the fairy food, which they pressed so much upon their visitants, it meant a chain round their feet, binding them to the shadowy world. Sometimes they were just on the point of tasting it when one of the fairy band, whose face perhaps had a haunting resemblance to some old friend long since lost, would convey a warning to them. Fairyland seemed, indeed, always to have within it men and women who had been human once, but having been decoyed, and passed under this bondage spell of meat and drink, had become as the fairies themselves.

The most widespread notion in the fairy superstition, however, was perhaps that of the changeling. The elves seemed always eager to snatch away a healthy infant from its people, and leave some fairy weakling in its place. The substitute might seem a baby in size and age, but when discovered and exposed it was usually found to be an old withered creature, a cross and cankered elfish carle, perhaps even hundreds of years old !

Many a dream on a fair night confirmed the old-world fears and fancies, and deepened the old-world dread of the unseen.

The great charm against the fairies was iron, or the name of God. The front of a bed, therefore, had a row of nails driven into it as a defence ; a horseshoe was hung above the lintel, as a guard over the entrance to the house ; even a poker laid across the cradle protected the child who had not yet received the consecration of the name of God in baptism. The remnant of the belief still remains in the habit of touching cold iron as a ward against evil chance.

In Fifeshire fishing villages it is considered well to touch a nail anywhere, even in church, if the name of the enemy of mankind be mentioned.

The railway long since drove the fairies far from many of their ancient haunts, and the motor-car and newspaper are still further narrowing the marches of the fairy kingdom; but the smoke of the one and the dust of the other have dimmed what was a beautiful window through which men read, in the spirit of early dawn, the wonder of the world.

The "little people" of the green knolls in the glens were not, however, alone in their influence on the lives of the folks at the firesides and in the shielings long ago. Dwarfs, goblins, and brownies also entered with help or hindrance upon human affairs, and the simple hearts did not wonder at the mystery of their coming and going.

Perhaps some old inferior, stunted, and disfigured outcast race, glad to creep to lonely kitchens for food which superstitious fears laid out for them, and showing their gratitude by doing odd bits of work in return for such kindness as they received, found their way into legend and folklore.

How easily from such could arise the story of a haunting figure like the following so weirdly described by Nicholson:

"There cam' a strange wicht to oor toun-en',
And the fient a bodie did him ken.
He tirl'd na lang, but glided ben,
Wi' a dreary, eerie hum.

"His face did glow like the glow o' the West,
When the drumlie cloud has it half-o'ercast,
Or the struggling moon, when she's sair distrest—
O sirs, 'twas Aiken Drum!

"His matted heid on his breast did rest;
A lang blue beard wandered doon like a vest,
But the glare o' his e'e has na'e bard exprest,
Nor the skimes o' Aiken Drum.

"Roun' his hairy form where there was naething seen,
But a philabeg o' the rashes green,
And his knotted knees played 'doit' between.
Sic a sicht was Aiken Drum.

"On his wauchie airms three claws did meet,
As they trailed on the grun', by his taeless feet;
E'en the auld guidman himsel' did sweat
To look at Aiken Drum!"

Sympathy was all that he wanted. The hunger of a onely soul, left to the solitude of desolate places, finds echo in the pleading utterance of the legendary goblin, pathetically reflecting the life of the lingering race. Out of a land without the music of running water, dim, dark, and sombre, from some cavern in the hills, the friendless, rugged creature steals to the cottage fireside, begging only to be allowed to labour, and to use his old-world store of mystic croons to charm the weary to sweet sleep.

And the ballad catches the witchery of it all:

"I lived in a land whaur we saw nae sky,
I dwalt in a spot whaur nae burn rins by;
But I'se dwall wi' you, if ye'd like tae try;
Hae ye wark for Aiken Drum?

"I'll shiel your sheep in the mornin' sune,
I'll berry your crap by the licht o' the mune,
And ba' the bairns wi' an unkent tune,
If ye'll keep puir Aiken Drum."

The breath of the moorlands is in this—the dark sombre uplands, with a glint of the mountain burn in the afterglow, and the weird glimmer of the moorland pool, with its fringe of sighing rashes.

All the recompense Aiken Drum asked, when he came to the muirland farm, was little enough:

"I'se seek nae guids, gear, bond nor mark,
I use nae beddin', shoon, nor sark,
But a cogfu' o' brose 'tween the licht and the dark
Is the wage o' Aiken Drum."

Especially was the brownie afraid of anything like an offer of money or clothes. This is exactly what would strike a lingering survivor of a primitive folk, afraid of these as though they were chains on his feet.

In the brighter, sunnier, low country, however, the brownie was of a brisker mould. Perhaps the merriest was "Wag at the Wa'," as he was known, and he was a curious conglomeration. He was eternally teasing the kitchen-maids, and he was very fond of sitting on the iron cleek which was meant for the pots to swing from. He was fond of the bairns, and fond of a joke, and his laugh was as

merry and clear as a bell. His dress was a red woollen coat and blue trousers, with often a grey cloak over all; and sometimes he sat on the cleek and shivered even then. He looked impish, too, for all the merriment and trickery; and he was wrinkled and had short, bent, twisted legs, and he had toothache all the time. Here in this fireside legendary character a wholly different aspect of experience is reflected. The dreary loneliness of the upland, which finds a sad echo in the creation of Aiken Drum, is lost in the reflected fireside gaiety and easy existence among the sunnier plains, so closely are life and legend bound up together.

What was the origin of these tales of tangible yet supernatural beings? Who can tell? They seemed to have been survivals of a faith in tutelary deities of the farm and of the fold, for they frequently had a libation of milk or cream poured out to them. The superstition may be a remnant of some old religious rite, some shuddering fear which has got tangled about wandering outcast relicts of broken races, lingering on through generations long after the reality had gone for ever. The isolation of the days before our own yesterdays would help out many an illusion, caused by the passing of wandered half-mad creatures through the hills. There is less for the brownie and the elf to do in the desolate glens, and there are fewer hearts to be startled by their own shadows, or by the echo of their own voices at the back of the mountains, where to-day the children who dreamed their dreams to the tinkle of the burns that run among the mosses are now no longer.

Of all strange imaginings which have fed the fears and fancies of susceptible generations, surely the strangest is that of the sea-folk. It was when the rebellion of the angels was quelled in heaven and the conquered spirits were cast headlong—some sank into abysmal bottomlessness and became devils; some fell into the sea and became mermaids and mermen; but those who only reached the moors and hills, lingered on in quiet recesses, and became the fairy people of the glens. Those outcast spirits have always displayed a feverish anxiety to get into touch with humanity—the devils that they might ruin living souls, the sea-folks that they might acquire souls for themselves, and the fairies because they had a hungry hope of being able still to win salvation through such contact. The origin of the myth is absolutely

veiled in mystery, but the idea is widespread from Babylon to the Hebrides, and into the Indian forests.

Sometimes even to look upon the mermaid meant disaster. Innumerable tales were told of the weird, lonely woman, down on the stones by the shore, beating and washing the bloody shroud of him who was to die, singing the while unworldly songs which turned the listener's blood to water. Hugh Miller tells of the girl who on a Sabbath morn, on the dark shore of Loch Slin, heard the stillness broken by the sound of the "beetling" of clothes, and as she hurried past she saw a beautiful woman standing in the water just beyond the belt of rushes, washing blood-stained shirts, thirty of which were already spread upon the banks to dry. In the church the psalm was being sung when the stone roof crashed in upon the worshippers, and the bloody shirts found their victims!

It is astonishing how frequently men were ready to succumb. The simpler the station the more open-eyed seemed the soul. Thus, when the Laird of Lorntie was drawn to the loch-side by the cries of a drowning woman, and was about to grasp her by the hair, which floated in golden hanks upon the water, it was his servant that saw the wile of the water-witch, who shouted with fiendish malignity from the water:

"Lorntie, Lorntie,
Were it no your man,
I had gar'd your heart's blood,
Skirl in my pan."

MacPhie of Colonsay, according to tradition, was detained in a cave by such a creature, and only escaped with difficulty.

Sometimes, however, they were not entirely vindictive, and were not above giving a warning even to their enemies. Notably was this evidenced in the experience of a Caithness seal-hunter, who, conveyed to the deeps to administer healing to a wounded merman, in whose side his own seal-knife was sticking, was admonished to be careful for the future.

Enquiry was duly made by Mr Edmonstone into an instance at Yell, in Shetland, when a mermaid was entangled in the fishing lines, and was for three hours in the boat, handled, and seen by six men. It moaned and whimpered till it awoke their fear, and they gave it its liberty. The following depositions were sworn to before the Sheriff-Substitute,

with Norman MacLeod, minister of Campbeltown, father of the great Norman, and Mr Maxwell of Aros. The simple statements bring the whole scene before us—the girl herding the cattle on the machar by the sea, startled to behold the living form of this ancient superstition before her in the waves!

"At Campbeltown, *twenty-ninth of October* 1811.—In presence of Duncan Campbell, Esq., Sheriff-Substitute of Kintyre, appeared John M'Isaac, tenant in Corphine . . . solemnly sworn and examined depones, . . . that about three or four o'clock of Sunday the eighteenth current, having taken a walk towards the seaside, he came to the edge of a precipice above the shore, from which he saw the appearance of something white upon a black rock at some distance from him. . . . He crept upon all fours through a field of corn, till he got among the rocks near to the white object above-mentioned, and then from rock to rock, until he came within twelve or fifteen paces of the rock where it lay; That, upon looking at the object with attention, he was impressed with great surprise and astonishment at its uncommon appearance. . . . That the upper half of it was white, and of the shape of a human body, and the other half towards the tail, of a brindled or reddish-grey colour apparently covered with scales, but the extremity of the tail itself was of a greenish-red shining colour. Depones, that the head of this animal was covered with long hair; and as the wind blew off the land, it sometimes raised the hair over the creature's head, and every time the gust of wind would do this, the animal would lean towards one side, and taking up the opposite hand, would stroke the hair backwards and then, leaning upon the other side of its head in the same manner; it would at the same time put back the hair on both sides of its head in this manner; it would also spread or extend its tail like a fan, to a considerable breadth, and while so extended, the tail continued in tremulous motion, and, when drawn together again it remained motionless, and appeared to the deponent to be about twelve or fourteen inches broad, lying flat upon the rock. . . . That the animal, upon the whole was between four and five feet long, as near as he could judge; that it had a head, arms, and body, down to the middle like a human being, only that the arms were short in proportion to the body which appeared to be about the thickness of that of a young lad, and tapering gradually to the point of the tail; that at the time it was stroking its head as above-mentioned he cannot say whether the fingers were webbed or not, as they were kept close together; that he continued concealed looking at the animal for near two hours, the part of the rock on which it lay being dry all that time; that after the sea had as far retired as to leave the rock dry, to the height of five feet above the surface of the water, the animal leaning first upon one

hand or arm, and then upon the other, drew its body forward to the edge of the rock, and then tumbled clumsily into the sea; that the deponent immediately got upon his feet from the place of his concealment, and, in about a minute thereafter, he observed the animal appearing above water, very near to the said rock, and then for the first time he saw its face, every feature of which he could see distinctly marked, and which, to him, had all the appearance of the face of a human being, with very hollow eyes; and, being particularly interrogated, depones, that the cheeks were of the same colour with the rest of the face; that the neck seemed to be short, and the animal was constantly, with both hands, stroking and washing its breast, which was half immersed in the water, and of which, of course, he had but an imperfect view; that, for this reason, he cannot say whether its bosom was formed like a woman's or not. . . . That one of the reasons for lying so long concealed, as above described, was from the expectation that the ebb tide would leave the rock, and that part of the shore dry, before the animal would move from it, and that he would then be able to secure it. Depones, that he had been informed that some boys in the neighbouring farm of Ballinatunie saw a creature of the above appearance in the sea, close to the shore, on the afternoon of the same Sunday. All of which he declares to be truth as he shall answer to God; and depones he cannot write.

"DUNCAN CAMPBELL,
"*Sheriff-Substitute.*"

"CAMPBELTOWN, *29th October*, 1811.—We, the Rev. Doctor George Robertson, and Mr Norman MacLeod, minister of Campbeltown, and James Maxwell, Esq., Chamberlain of Mull, do hereby certify, that we were present when the above-named John M'Isaac delivered his testimony, as before-mentioned; that we know of no reason why his veracity should be called in question; and, that from the manner in which he delivered his evidence, we are satisfied that he was impressed with a perfect belief that the appearance of the animal he has described was such as he has represented it to be.

"GEO. ROBERTSON,
"NOR. MACLEOD,
"JA. MAXWELL, J.P."

"AT CAMPBELTOWN, *2nd November*, 1811.—In presence of Duncan Campbell, Esq., Sheriff-Substitute of the district of Kintyre, compeared Katherine Loynachan, daughter to Lachlan Loynachan, herd in Ballinatunie, who being examined and interrogated, declares, that on the afternoon of a Sunday, about three weeks ago, she was herding cattle for her father at the seaside. That as she was turning the cattle towards home, and being at the time very close to the seaside, she observed some

creature sliding upon its belly, off one of the rocks very near her, into the sea; that she observed this creature had a head, covered with long hair of a darkish colour, the shoulders and back white, with the rest of the body tapering like a fish, and as she thought, of a darkish-brown colour; that, after sliding from the rock, it disappeared under water, but immediately thereafter it came above water again, about six yards further out, and turned about, with the face of it towards the shore, where the declarant was standing, and having laid one hand, which was like a boy's hand, upon another rock that was near the first rock, it came in nearer to the shore than it was; That at this time the declarant saw the face of it distinctly, which had all the appearance of the face of a child, and as white, and at this time the animal was constantly rubbing or washing its breast with one hand, the fingers being close together. Declares, that . . . she thought it was a boy that had fallen out of a vessel passing by, and was swimming inshore for his life, upon which she went home in a hurry and told her mother what she saw at the shore as aforesaid. . . .

"Duncan Campbell,
"*Sheriff-Substitute.*"

"Compeared Lachlan Loynachan, herd in Ballinatunie, father to the precedent declarant, who, . . . declares, that upon Sunday the 13th day of October, last, as he was going from his house before sunset, to look after some of the cattle of the farm, the day being stormy, his wife called him back, and informed him that their daughter Katherine came from the shore saying that there was a boy swimming along shore, and desired the declarant to see what it was. Declares that he, his wife, and his daughter Katherine went to the seaside, where she said the boy was swimming, but no boy or person was to be seen there.

"Duncan Campbell,
"*Sheriff-Substitute.*"

When we find such beliefs lingering on to the very threshold of our own day, and sometimes even over it, we cannot wonder that the shadow often looms above our history until we scarce can separate mere superstition from absolute truth. Thus, when the hapless James, who led the flower of Scottish chivalry to death and disaster at Flodden, was worshipping in Linlithgow Church, just before he went away, a strange commanding figure appeared unannounced, solemnly warning him of certain defeat and of unnumbered sorrows awaiting his race if he persisted in the enterprise; then suddenly it vanished among the astonished courtiers before they could remonstrate. It was like the spirit of that sad

age pleading with him whom Fate had singled out to die amid his nobles on dark Flodden's ridge. Again, just before the king and the Scottish army left Edinburgh for that same field of sorrow, there were tales of ghostly parade and pageant having been seen moving through Parliament Square, and how an unearthly voice was heard at the Cross as if calling the roll of the noblemen and notables that were to fall, summoning them to judgment. Richard Lawson of Highriggs, formerly a Lord Provost of Edinburgh, in passing heard his own name in the catalogue, and cried aloud: "I appeal from that sentence to the mercy of God in Jesus Christ!" And when the fight was over, it was observed that Richard Lawson was the only one of all that dreadful list who came back to the city. The rest had obeyed the midnight cry.

The same thing it was that made the Scottish folk incredulous of the tidings of the death of James IV. at Flodden. Nay, but away in some distant land, wearing the floor of some holy cell—anywhere but in death's chill shadows, the king of the chivalrous heart was waiting, and would return again.

So also with Thomas the Rhymer. Some say he sits with his head on his hand, waiting his hour, under Tomnahurich Hill at Inverness, others that it is beneath Dumbuck, near Dumbarton. One entered and found him there, but he lifted up his eyes so suddenly and said, "Is it time yet?" that the fellow fled in fear.

The life of the people was threaded on such pathetic imaginings, whereby they interpreted the mysteries of the shadowed life they lived. The seasons had their rites and ceremonies, through some of which peep survivals of fears and propitiations.

Scottish life, up even to the last fifty years, had not the multitudinous aspect of our modern institution, and the festivals proper to the successive seasons were doubtless eagerly anticipated, earnestly prepared for, and carried through by young and old, with a zest and earnestness which might seem to us ridiculous, or, at the least, amusing. Though many of these rites and festivals are now utterly neglected, while the remnant of them are hastily shuffled over, or linger on in a half-existence in remote rural districts, or even have descended to the level of the disreputable and

vulgar in our busy age, yet they indubitably formed the real backbone of existence for our simpler-mannered ancestors. Christmas is the Aaron's rod which shall swallow up the rest of the lesser ceremonies of the year. Soon, and it is with regret we see it, those festivals and ceremonies with the floating literature that follows in their wake will be old folks' tales, told with tender reminiscence of bygone days, around the fireside, or will be relegated to the scrap-book of the curious, or the record of the poet's page.

Hogmanay and the New Year's Day, with a reviving spasm on the Hansel Monday—the "Daft Days" as they were styled—and the name lets in a flash-like depth of meaning to the mode of their observance—have a rough literature about them which wonderfully reflects the life and customs of the time. We all, I fancy, know the children's chant at Hogmanay:

> "Get up, auld wife, and shake your feathers,
> Dinna think that we are beggars;
> We are bairns come out to play—
> Get up, and gie's our Hogmanay."

There is, I believe, a variant on the above, which, however, I have never come across:

> "Get up, auld wife, and bena sweir,
> And deal your breid to them that's here,
> For the time will come when ye'll be deid,
> And then ye'll neither need ale nor breid!"

This comforting assurance, and notwithstanding the phrase "auld wife," which would certainly freeze up all kindly feeling in any modern dame, doubtless had the desired effect.

Another rhyme runs thus:

> "My feet's cauld, my shoon's thin;
> Gie's my cakes, and let me rin."

This is quite up-to-date, and in thorough agreement with the post-haste of our own day.

From far-away Orkney comes another echo of life, of which the following is a scrap:

> "This nicht is guid New're'en nicht,
> We're a' here, Queen Mary's men,
> And we come here to crave our richt,
> And that's before our Ladie."

Note the curious thread of papacy here, where "Queen Mary" and "Our Ladie" doubtless refer to the Virgin—all the more remarkable as popery was early dead among the Orcadians.

> "Ye ken the weather's snaw and sleet,
> Stir up the fire to warm our feet,
> Our shoon's made o' the mare's skin;
> Come, open the door, and let us in."

To any one familiar with Ultima Thule, this rhyme must really smack of the soil. Between us and the page before us, there grows a picture of shivering Norland peasants, with their "rivvelins" of hide on their feet, rough-shod but kindly-hearted, as Northerns are, waiting for the door to open, and the good wife to welcome them to the immemorial hospitality.

The "Guizard" was wont to claim the festive periods for himself. He is now practically dead, and soon will not even be a memory. The generation that knew him even in his day of raggedness is almost past. The "Daft Days" were not alone his, of right, but he appeared at Pashe and Corpus Christi, though in modern times he became only a kitchen visitor at Hogmanay or on Christmas Eve. Sir Walter used to have a visit from him at Ashestiel and Abbotsford:

> "Then came the merry masquers in
> And carols roared with blithesome din:
> If unmelodious was the song
> It was a hearty note and strong.
> Who lists may in their mumming see
> Traces of ancient mystery."

The Guizard was, undoubtedly, in Scotland the descendant of the ancient Mystery player. Perhaps his earliest appearance was in Aberdeen in 1445, when he played in *The Haly Blude*. He was an agent and coadjutor of the church, but soon was turned out into the kirkyard, then to the market square, and then, by sure but steady descent, to the country lane, the barn, the farmyard or farm kitchen, and the wide world anywhere. Even in the royal household he had once a footing, and the treasurer's accounts record gratuities for the cost of "Robene Hude's" furnishings. But "Robene's" man found light-fingered comradeships in the "howff"

and under the hedges, and the gallows often was the final stage for the wandering Guizard who had fallen into discredit. The church had no pity for the player who had learned to thrust a dagger in her bosom, even earlier than David Lyndsay's day of *The Satyr of the Thrie Estaits.*

The men of the Mystery and Morality had taught the people sacred things like the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the stories of the saints, the love of Christ, and the Reformers were at first kind to them. Even Knox was present at a stage play in St Andrews, and David Laing goes the length of supposing that Nathaniel, one of the sons of the great reformer, acted the part of a soldier in a play at Cambridge in 1579. The fact is, that why the Reformed Church set her face against the stage was that the plays of *King of May* and *Robin Hood* were profane, not representing Holy Scripture, and, above all, were played on the Sabbath Day. The Guizard was therefore pilloried as a Sabbath-breaker, and not merely as a player, with idolaters, murderers, and their kind. They were declared to be "contrair to the laws of God and of the countrie." Besides, the play was found more attractive than the sermon—sick people who could not come to church, and even elders and deacons, frequented the May plays. Fines and ecclesiastical discipline had no deterrent effect. But Cromwell and his stern-faced Puritans came into Scotland, and their iron hand crushed Robin Hood almost out of existence. The Guizard then lingered only where the Puritan halberd could not reach. The individualism of modern days, with its locked door and barred window, completed the silencing process.

In his late survival he preserved certain marks of his ancient origin. He was independent of scenery; only the paper hat kept the memory of the mitre of the Abbot of Unreason before his audience, though he himself probably had forgotten the meaning of the usage. His rude rhymes also kept alive the fragment of a tragic libretto whose trail is evident still across the dramatic reliques of Europe. To-day he has really not a scrap left of his ancient repertory. His stock-piece used to be *Galashan* or *Golishan.* A specimen of one version of it may be given. Bol Bendo, the kings of France and Spain, Doctor Beelzebub, Galashan, and Sir Alexander, probably the Great, or else one of the Pope's knights, the parish priest usually having the title of courtesy,

were the *personæ*. The prologue has remained in popular residue :

> " Hogmanay,
> Trollolay,
> Give us of your white bread,
> Nane of your gray."

Galashan enters with his cry :

> " In come I, Galashan, Galashan of renown ;
> A sword and pistol by my side, I hope to win the crown."

Bol Bendo claiming it, however, slays the hero. But to assuage the anger of the others he calls in Doctor Beelzebub, who, after pattering charms, raises the dead man to life again with a pinch of snuff. The actors then sing together :

> " The night it is called Hogmanay,
> We wish you all good cheer,
> With as many guineas in the house,
> As days are in the year.
> And bless the master of the house
> The mistress also,
> And all the bonnie bairnies
> That round the table go."

In the Highlands the band that perambulated the townships and villages at Christmas were known as the *fir-duan* or song-men, *Gillean Nollaig* or Christmas fellows, *nuallairean* or rejoicers. When they entered a house they laid their hands on a child, if they had not a child's effigy with them. This " little Christ," as it was called, was carried on a lamb's skin three times about the fire, which was usually, of course, in the middle of the floor, and the household gave gifts of bread, butter, and cheese. The symbolism is evident. It was a remnant of a Miracle of the Shepherds. Their song was a song of blessing for the house and all therein. The Hogmanay or *Calluinn* festival had also a ceremony in the islands with unique accompaniments. The carollers went around the dwellings of the township, their leader with a hard bull's hide on his back, with horns, hoofs, and tail attached. They climbed the walls of the house, ran sunwards around the parapet on the top, from which the roof sprang, while his comrades beat the hide with sticks, shouting and singing. Then they descended, entered the house, the tail was singed in the fire, and the household smelt it, and thereafter the visitors were feasted or had gifts bestowed on them.

The bull, the cleansing by fire, or by sacrifice, are doubtless pagan in origin, and a survival of times remote beyond historic explanation. In some cases the head of the house went seven times round the children and the housewife with the smoking token. The visitors' blessing was:

> "God bless this dwelling,
> Stone, beam, and rafter;
> Health here be always,
> Food, drink, and laughter."

But they had a curse of the widest and the deepest for the unkind, ere they went, if they were coldly received:

> "God's curse with you go,
> Blight of buzzard sweeping low,
> Thieving eagle, harrying kite,
> And greedy fox that sneaks by night."

It was wisest to receive them well. At the worst they were more easily got rid of that way. But faith beyond faith won them always the open door.

CHAPTER XXVII

LIFE IN COUNTRY AND TOWN

In the Lowlands the people were not given to travel far from their native seat. The general want of roads, or, where such did exist, the wretched quality of them, combined with the dangers to travellers from robbers on the land, and pirates on the sea, made those whom compulsion dragged from home commit themselves to their journey, however brief, with prayer, while those who stayed at home thanked Heaven for the privilege. Timber was in many places very scarce—in fact, the want of it struck Æneas Sylvius in his fifteenth-century visit, and Johnson on his tour in the eighteenth. Such growing timber as there was had to be protected by statute in the reign of David. During the sixteenth century several Acts were passed ordering the planting of wood, and especially were landowners compelled to cultivate timber in the vicinity of their houses. Blakhall, the priest, who made a secret tour through Scotland in 1643, said the Torwood had only "some scattered oackes, dying for antiquity." In 1729 MacIntosh of Borlum wrote that some shires were "entirely without a bush or a stake in them." Yet, when John of Gaunt in 1380 marched into Scotland, the English had in some districts near the Border to clear a path with hatchets for their progress.

In the sixteenth century Lothian, Fife, and Moray were rich in fertile cultivated lands, while Teviotdale and the Merse had wealth of oats and barley, and great stock of sheep, frequently suffering, of course, great damage at the hands of the "auld enemy of England." Hardyng, in his *Itinerary*, gives a most complete account of Scotland in the fifteenth century, and it is amazing to find such a picture of agricultural prosperity. Dean Monro's *Description of the Western Isles* in 1549 displays resources almost incredible to us to-day.

The village life was not interesting. Æneas Sylvius describes the cabins as roofed with turf, and the doors as being frequently made of hides of oxen. Even in the seventeenth century the inns were of the most wretched description, and nothing was done to improve them, as in reality there was little need, the grace of hospitality being gladly bestowed on the chance traveller who came along with a little news, a fresh story, or a song. In 1773 Bishop Percy, writing to his wife during a tour he made in Scotland with his pupil, Lord Algernon Percy, tells how his party, having failed to get quarters at Tarbert, had to drive over the hills to Cairndow, on Loch Fyne, which they reached by midnight:

"Being obliged to raise the people out of their beds, they stared at us with affright to see company at that late hour. At first they told us the house was full, but at length we gained admittance, and in order to procure us a room to sup in, an old man and woman were raised out of bed in what was called the best chamber, and we were supping very heartily on excellent fish, rashers of bacon, and potatoes, when we were surprised with the noise of a person snoring—we looked round with astonishment; at length I traced the noise to what we had taken for a clothes' press, but upon my unbuttoning the door, lo! a bed appeared and the naked hairy arm of a Highlander, who lay there snoring and sleeping beside us. A private room was procured for Mr and Mrs Durant, and our supper-room assigned to myself; where in very sweet clean sheets I slept soundly. But poor Mrs B. who could not think of passing the night in this, called the best chamber, with a Highlander, tho' buttoned up in a press, was carried to a much worse room below stairs; and shown such another press, and while she was preparing to lie down in her clothes, was alarmed with a second snoring in her chamber, and inquiring whence it proceeded, was answered by the Highland hostess, who could hardly speak any language but Erse, that it was only 'her papa and mamma.' Upon which, supposing she might safely venture herself along with two decrepit old people, she lay down with great composure. But in the morning she heard one of the bare-footed damsels of the house come and open two or three presses and whisper to the persons within to make no noise, for 'Missy lay there;' and presently she saw come forth, buttoning up their clothes, three soldiers and two Highlanders, who she found had slept all night in the same chamber."

The fourteenth century saw Scotland fully engaged in her conflict with England for her own independence; in the fifteenth the contest for power between king and barons

filled the bulk of the programme, the result being that at the end of the century the throne stood firmer and more richly endowed than ever. England and Scotland were, however, considered to be in a perennial state of warfare unless truce had been agreed upon; and the country had, as far as it could, to look to its defences. There were, in most of the towns, exceedingly poor. The strong hearts of the people, steeled with native courage, were the living bulwark of the land. Edinburgh was always being worried in such a matter as this. Her walls were never satisfactory; in fact, never seemed to have been efficiently completed even after the scare of Flodden. Her closes and vennels were a source of continuous danger, in face of a hostile invasion, and though the magistrates regularly ordered their exits to be built up, the citizens were soon very ready to be forgetful of the injunction. It did not matter much that the gates were closed at nightfall; the citizen who had been abroad could always find some easy place to scale the walls and secure re-admission to the city. The closes were crowded with refuse and decaying rubbish, and Dunbar did not hesitate to taunt the city with its fault in this respect:

"May nane pas throw zour principall gaitis,
For stink of haddockis and of scaitis;
For cryis of carlingis and debaittis;
For fensum flyttingis of defame:
Think ze nocht schame,
Befoir strangeris of all estaittis
That sic dishonour hurt zour name!

"Zour Stinkand Style that standis dirk,
Haldis the lycht fra zour pareoche kirk;
Zour foirstairis makis zour housis mirk,
Lyk na cuntray bot heir at hame:
Think ze nocht schame,
Sa litill polesie to wirk
In hurt and sklander of zour name! . . .

"Zour proffeit daylie dois incres,
Zour godlie workis less and les;
Through streittis nane may mak progres,
For cry of cruikit, blind, and lame:
Think ze nocht schame,
That ze sic substance dois posses,
And will nocht win ane bettir name!"

The seat of government and the courts of justice were transferred to Edinburgh in the fifteenth century; thereafter that city became the capital, and attempts were always being made to get rid of the middens which cumbered the streets and alleys, to get the citizens to carry torches, and to keep their ways in repair, but these attempts were continually thwarted by indifference and actual contumacy.

The towns were enclosed by rough walls, connecting the gardens and houses, but these were frequently in a dilapidated condition, and so made a very imperfect means of defence. It was remarkable, indeed, that the Border communities were not really walled. The deplorably insanitary condition of the streets made the towns and villages subject to the most terrible visitations of pestilence, such as that of 1439, which was fatal within twenty-four hours, and from which nobody could hope for recovery. Beggars and lepers infested the streets, and gave passengers no peace or rest from their importunities.

The wages of labour in a town were about a shilling a day, but skilled hands could earn from three to five shillings. The burgh market was the only outlet for the produce of the people within certain districts which were attached to the burghs, and these had to pay custom at the gates before they entered. The right to export goods belonged only to royal burghs, with the striking anomaly that Leith had no foreign trade, though it was a seaport—that right falling entirely to Edinburgh.

Sunday was a day of markets, which in some places were, under royal charter, held in the churchyard. Yule and Pasch—Christmas and Easter—were the great holidays, along with the Saints' Days. The "Clerk-plays" and the pageant of Robin Hood at Beltane were the popular amusements, but the last-named was put down because of the disorders which it brought with it.

After the Covenanting troubles had subsided, Scotland settled into peace, and turned eagerly to trade; but she was much hampered by the conditions of the Union. The disastrous effects of the failure of the Darien Scheme threw her into a feverish spasm of rage over her treatment by England in this matter; and poverty and starvation drew aside the curtain of the eighteenth century. The Darien Scheme was probably the biggest thing Scotland ever ventured. It

involved four hundred thousand pounds of capital, subscribed entirely by Scotland. The English East Indian traders bitterly opposed it, and by their influence induced the Hamburg traders to withhold one hundred thousand pounds which they had promised to contribute. The result was the renewal and deepening of Scottish hate for England, and the quickening of Jacobite principles as being a means of expression of that feeling.

The Scottish peasant was always given to free speech, and resented anything which hindered his liberty. That instinct was one of the root-principles of the great Reformation movement. It was also at the root of the provocations which secured the utterance of the greatest poet Scotland had. If the Romish Church had fettered the will of the people in her day, the Protestant Church was inclined to fetter the whole life. And not without reason, for the morality of certain districts was lax and callous. But gripping one part of the manifestations of conduct, she began to gather all into her hand. Indeed, the kirk was very soon all-powerful in the country in matters of national conduct, as well as in matters of faith. She wielded with fearless and unflinching hand the functions of a moral police. In the exercise of these functions her censures fell equally on the rich and the poor.

After the Reformation the zeal for securing the righteousness of the people instituted a system of espionage which in time became a tyranny. In 1648 the system was thorough ; it was enacted that

"every elder have a certain bounds assigned to him that he may visit the same every moneth at least, and report to the Session what scandalls and abuses are therein."

This had become so much the work of elders that the Session of Galston in Ayrshire considered

"that they had need of some more Elders for watching over the manners of the congregation."

They had their hands full. They watched the village through Divine service on Sunday, to see who were drinking in taverns instead of being in church. They played "peek-bo" with every kind of immorality in the parish, dogged wedding

parties, and marked down who swore or quarrelled. The remarkable thing was that the very people who might have been expected to rebel against this espionage actually complained of their ministers and elders if they did not watch them enough! One curious ground of offence, upon the discovery of which the whole parish was enlisted, was the composing of poetical pasquils. Thus, in an old record in Ayr, it is declared that:

"in case ony persoun or persouns at ony time sall find, heir, or see ony ryme or cokalane, that they sall reveil the same first to ane eldar privatlie, and to na uther, and in case they faille therein in reveiling of the same to ony uther, that persoun sall be esteemed to be the authour of the said ryme, and sall be punished therefor, conforme to the Acts of the Kirke and ye laws of ye realme."

It was necessary, also, in order to help on the successful surveillance of the parish, that all who came into it should produce testimonials from the minister or Kirk Session of the parish from which they had come. In 1648, therefore, it was ordained that

"all persons who flit from one paroch to another have sufficient testimonials."

This even included "the quality" and their followers who came to reside in Edinburgh or elsewhere. The want of this testimonial laid every one open to be declared before the congregation as a scandalous person. Those who had come without these were driven out of the parish, and landlords who let houses to such persons came under the ban of the church. One who, in Fenwick Parish in 1692, refused to put away a cotter under these circumstances, was to be handed over to the civil magistrate. It was perfectly hopeless for a man to try to evade this law. The Session books of the time are full of it. The Earl of Mar's piper, Duncan Erskine, fled beyond the hills to evade it; but his shadow followed him, and he was brought back and made to stand upon the pillar as a recusant. An Alloa record illustrates not only this, but also the size of Edinburgh in the eighteenth century. A girl had come into the town and taken up residence in a house, but the fact that she had not a testimonial was scented out. Her hostess was summoned to the Session, but had more excuses than the law could pene-

trate, or the wedding guests of the gospel could provide. Her host went further back, and followed Adam's example of blaming his wife. The case dragged on until at length, when the church officer was sent to bring the girl herself before the Session, it was discovered that she had gone on board a ship at Alloa and sailed for Leith. The Session were determined to do their duty, so they sent for the post-runner, who solemnly promised that the next time he went to Edinburgh he would search for the delinquent.

The punishments which were in the hands of the Kirk Session were not confined to this world and to this age, for in the records of Elgin we find one woman, who had been several times rebuked, banished from the town *in eternum.*

From 1560 to the opening of the nineteenth century the eye of the church looked into every life and searched the shadows at every fireside. Later days show gentler methods adopted, and for first faults a man would be rebuked in private, yet the degrees of tenderness in dealing with sinners varied across the country. Thus one man who, through "aqua vytie," had become "madd with all that cam within his gate," was privately censured, whereas, twenty years afterwards, public censure followed for cursing the elders, for driving a cow on the road on the Sabbath, and for slandering one's neighbours.

There were certain places and methods of public penance at which the offender had to satisfy the Session. The "jougs" or the "bredyane" were punishments pure and simple. The iron collar which was put round the neck of the offender can be seen on the church gates throughout the country still, and the scolding wife had to submit to the "branks" or bridle, at the same place. The kirk door and the pillar inside the church were places of humble penitence. Persons who had been under the ban of excommunication, and who were permitted to show their repentance, had to stand bareheaded at the church door every Sabbath day during the prayers before and after the sermon. They were allowed to enter during the sermon, but had to depart before the closing prayer. In the case of those who had not been excommunicated, this was not exacted, yet many of this latter class had, later on in the seventeenth century, to stand in sackcloth outside the church door, and thereafter inside the church on the stool of repentance. The power

of the church was displayed more than once convincingly. For example, at the baptism of James VI. in 1566, in Stirling Castle, the rites were according to the forms of the Roman Catholic Church, his mother being of that faith. Lady Argyle was present. She was cited, for she was a Presbyterian. She admitted her offence, and submitted to the discipline of the church; she was sentenced to make public repentance in the Chapel Royal at Stirling during the preaching. For some, the horror of this public exposure was more than human endurance could bear. It is recorded that in the West Church of Edinburgh, in 1693, a cobbler went raving mad before his course of penitence had been completed. Sometimes to stand before the church door in sackcloth and haircloth was not enough; a label, detailing the offence, was attached to the breast, and a mitre placed in mockery on the head of the offender. In the north you find instances of their having to stand barefooted and barelegged, despite the weather, for the most part of a year. Elgin seemed determined to put down bad language, and offenders were put in the "jougs" or in prison; if they could not find a money fine within twenty-four hours they were stripped and flogged in four public places in the town, and for a second offence were branded on the cheek and expelled.

The consequence was that church officials were frequently exposed to the revenges of verse-writers, and when the whip of correction changed hands it was laid on without stint, as we shall see.

CHAPTER XXVIII

BURNS

THE highest manifestation of Scottish poetry was to come from an unexpected source, in Robert Burns. 1759-1796.

It was too long and far too much the fashion to marvel over Burns as a ploughman prodigy; but the man was as marvellous as the ploughman, and the poet was greater than them both. It is as a poet that he holds the world's heart; but as a man he stands out broad-shouldered, with flashing eye and tremulous lip, and soul aflame with scorn, enslaving the imagination, intellect, and sympathy of men.

He was a man of reading and mental culture from the first, in that poor cottage by the roadside, in contact with a truly noble life and a religious environment. His father—the man from the Highland fringe, who had come down to Ayr in quest of a living, was a man of God; keeping, in his poverty and struggle, very near to the Eternal. It was from real life, as seen at that fireside, that Burns could draw the saintly sire with open Book, reading the story of the love of God, holding communion with heaven, on his knees, on that clay floor. His books on the corner shelf of the cottage were Ray's *Wisdom of God in the Works of Creation*, Addison's *Spectator*, Taylor on *Original Sin*—on which, alas, later, I fancy Burns himself could have been far more original!—Hervey's *Meditations among the Tombs*, that gloomy, severe but earnest favourite of our grandfathers, and Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding*. Old William Burness, the thoughtful father of the poet, had brooded over deepest questions of the soul and life. For the eighteenth century was deeply interested in quarrels between man and man in regard to the quarrels between man and God. The shepherds who stood by the Well of Life were often squabbling with

each other, and the cups that should have been cups of healing were frequently dipped in gall. But this man, who was little more than a peasant, turned from all these things, and with his own hand drew up for his children a Manual of Christian Doctrine in catechetical form. In some ways this little thing of folded paper was ahead of many a long sermon preached to weary congregations at the time. It had within it love and charity. This manual was transcribed with grammatical corrections by his friend Murdoch, the poet's early teacher. In 1875 a limited issue of it was printed at Kilmarnock. It is tinged with the "New Light," and it reverses the common idea of catechisms, for it is the child that catechizes and the parent that answers. It has only fourteen questions in place of the hundred and seven of the Shorter Catechism.

Scotland has names of note, memories of the brave, figures that loom gigantic on the canvas of history and romance; but none that excel, for human power, the name and influence of Burns. Behind all our life and work, right at the back of all that makes nationality for us, but lifted higher, is, for all time, that figure of the man in hodden grey, in the field among the furrows, hearing, and interpreting through his deep heart the varied music of all Nature, and fitting it into humanest needs. He came at a time when Scotland needed him. The native muse was sleeping, and, indeed, seemed dead. The voice of hapless Fergusson had sunk into silence; and for thirteen years the native harp seemed unstrung. Our poets, such as they were, were content to fumble in imitation of English writers, among drawing-room shepherds and shepherdesses, in conventional pastorals. A little longer, and the revival of national utterance would have easily become a thing impossible. But down in Ayrshire fields, in a humble cottage, where honesty and poverty were dwelling at the one fireside, as so often in Scotland they have dwelt, there was a heart ripening in the winds and the rain, absorbing things, laying up music against the day of utterance.

The little book of Doric verse that issued from the Kilmarnock Press in 1786 startled Scotland. Its influence, indeed, is not yet passed away, and the secret of its power is that in it individuality and sincerity are absolute.

The allegorical story-telling art of the old romancers

with glamour-giving atmosphere, finds utterance especially in *The Vision*, when, with a sad disappointment jading him, the poet sat down, after a long day at the flail, asking himself as he sat in the smoke what was the good of it all, and backward musing on wasted time:

"How I had spent my youthful prime,
And done nae thing;
But stringing blethers up in rhyme
For fools to sing.

"Had I to guid advice but harkit,
I might, by this, hae led a market,
Or struttit in a bank and clarkit
My cash-account;
While here, half-mad, half-fed, half-sarkit,
Is a' the amount."

But there is something for the ages greater than money and markets, and, while he thus reflects in gloom, the sneck is drawn on the rickety door, the Muse of Coila herself enters, and, like an angel of mercy, comforts him who had sung as none other had of the loves and sorrows, the joys and beauties of her land. Then, crowning her bard with holly:

"Like a passing thought, she fled,
In light away."

Fittingly she crowned him with symbol of what a singer of truth should wear! This man in "the clay bigging" was to "ding doun" respectable hypocrisy, and fling into the world, like a star, his eulogy of true manhood and true nobility, independent of decorations and the favour of kings. Well was it that his poet-wreath should be evergreen, with the thorns and the red berries, like drops of life's blood upon his brow!

His soul seems to have felt as though it had upon it the baptism of prophecy—the kiss of his country on his face. His singing was to be not for his own glory, nor for his own reward, but for his native land. As he himself says:

"Even then a wish, I mind its power,
A wish that to its latest hour
Shall strongly heave my breast,
That I for poor auld Scotland's sake
Some useful plan or book could make,
Or sing a song at least."

Nationality haunted him :

> "The rough bur thistle spreading wide
> Among the bearded bere,
> I turned the weeder clips aside,
> And spared the symbol dear."

The patriotic chord of the national lyre he swept, and to his touch it answered, knowing its master, with sobbing and laughter, and the march of heroes with the blood of sacrifice upon them, and the big brave pulse of a true heart fearless, like a drum-beat leading on. This spirit permeates his verses. The light on his songs of love or his dirges of sorrow is the light on the seas and streams, the hills and the plains of native land. He passed his fingers lovingly across the fading history of our land, and at his spell the figures of the brave stood out freshly once again. Heroes go marching to the field of freedom's battles, and the heart stirs yet to the song of Bruce's utterance. Hands join across the sea in stress and struggle of the Empire, and the battle hymn of Bruce becomes the marching music of the children of the blood. This man with the sore heart, and the vision before him, in the fields of Scotland, is uniquely the witness of his nation's duty, inheritance, and pride.

None of the Scottish poets sang of love like him. Indeed, here he added a tender string ; he brought an element of his own to the power and beauty of his country's song world. He added the chord of " domestic love," as in that chaste idyll, *John Anderson, my Jo.* This was founded on an old song before his day. The master took it to his heart, and it became a golden thing of sweetness—beautiful old age—true human love that "clamb the hill thegither" through buffeting winds and blinding rains, and now, silvered with the snows of age, sits waiting in the gloaming for the long sweet rest.

In his hands the peculiarly sardonic humour of Scotland got more of a " heart " into it, though he did use like a master what might be called the personal sarcasm which is somewhere about the foundation of all Scottish fun. Look at that terribly " sore " picture of the termagant by Tweedside, the wife of Willie Wastle :

> " He had a wife was dour and din—
> O Tinkler Madgie was her mither :
> Sic a wife as Willie had !
> I wadna gie a button for her.

"A whiskin' beard about her mou',
Her nose and chin they threaten ither: . . .
Her walie nieves like midden creels—
Her face wad fyle the Logan water.
Sic a wife as Willie had,
I wadna gie a button for her!"

How she and her kind must have winced, and sought for soap!

The same gift made his satire in the pretence-destroying, hypocrisy-dissecting *Holy Fair*, *Holy Willie's Prayer*, and *Death and Dr Hornbook*, almost a thing of terror. One can imagine the shock which must have come like a blow to those who, accustomed to sitting in moral judgment on their fellows, suddenly found themselves scathed and dissected, and the flame of an awful criticism playing about them. Nothing could have been more daring than the act of this young poet, to pillory and pelt with scorn those who had so often pierced the hearts of others. It was a revelation to the world; let us pray that it was a revelation to themselves! And it was not unnecessary. For in the eighteenth century the method of parochial government, and the extent to which ecclesiastical interference with ordinary liberty was carried, tended to make absolute tyrants of the elders who, like spiritual inquisitors, moved about watching, noting, and reporting whatever went on round about them in the ordinary life of the people. Those men, not always so much in reality to make others holy, as to win for themselves a reputation of extraordinary piety, became key-hole listeners and back-door watchers, flattening their holy noses against the window-pane to find their fellows in a fault. Dancing became a sin, the fiddle an instrument of the evil one, and a song was the mark of perdition. It seemed a great comfort to know, or at any rate to think, that your own soul was saved, especially if you were pretty certain that those who differed from you, or who spoke plain truths to you in the market, were outcast from grace.

It is not to be wondered at that such a system begot hypocrites, and that in almost every parish in Scotland you would find some whose cankered faces, reflecting a shrivelled heart and a spiteful spirit, were looked upon as models

for the godly, and admired from near and far as the "unco guid."

> "A robe of seeming truth and trust
> Hid crafty observation;
> And secret hung, with poisoned crust,
> The dirk of defamation.
> A mask that like the gorget showed
> Dye-varying on the pigeon;
> And, for a mantle, large and broad,
> He wrapt him in Religion."

"Holy Willie," whom Burns scarified with scathing sarcasm for his outstanding hypocrisy, was even such an one, and we can well believe was but a type of many who, being what they were, could pray:

> "I bless and praise thy matchless might,
> Whan thousands thou hast left in night,
> That I am here, afore thy sight,
> For gifts and grace,
> A burnin' and a shinin' light
> To a' this place."

This man, whom we can imagine shaking his head over the petty delinquencies of many, was discovered, at the hands of Death the great Revealer, to have been not only a canting hypocrite, but a drunkard and embezzler. He pilfered the poor box; and when returning from Mauchline Fair in 1809 he toppled into a rain-swollen ditch, and died in the darkness.

The veteran A. B. Todd, of Cumnock, in his *Autobiography* tells how his father knew "Holy Willie" well, and declared that Burns's picture of him was an exceedingly true one. Mr Todd's father was, indeed, one of those who extricated the body of the poor "canting, tippling creature" from its ditch. Curiously, Burns, in his *Epitaph on Holy Willie*, says:

> "His soul has ta'en some other way,
> I fear the left-hand road."

Fisher actually, on his way home, had taken the left-hand side of a fence and ditch near the farm of Meikle Auchinbrain, while the safe path was on the right side.

Do you wonder that, with such a conception of faith, laughter was a sin, music and joy of the heart, in fact, all sport and play, were of the very devil? Even the elect were not allowed to be glad that they were chosen. The Holy Willies

did not seem quite happy in their good fortune, yet their grief did not arise from their belief that so many of their fellows were flung aside by God. It was fitting that they should walk with lengthened face, often sighing with deep groanings, and he was the minister after their heart who possessed such signs of grace as Mr Alexander Dunlop, who was renowned and envied as the possessor of a "holy groan."

As late as 1836 a clergyman was still alive who had been censured for looking at a "Punch and Judy show" from the windows of his manse. This ridiculous spirit was supposed to be the proper spirit of Presbyterian Calvinism; but it was, of course, a mere absurd caricature of the truth, clung to by a set of narrow souls because it gave them power.

Now Ayrshire and the West were famous for their theological bias and fighting power. The memories of controversy and struggle, great and small, lingered there. In the kirkyard before and after sermon the debates of the peasantry were keen, for men were grappling on to a more gracious God, whose love gave Christ for the sake of mankind "to seek and save the lost." Some of the clergy did not hesitate to preach even the love of God—His Fatherhood, and the brotherhood of men; and in the controversy which ensued, this sharp-tongued, sword-blade-witted poet was on the fringe of the fighting, and soon in the midst of it—a free lance—on behalf of the rebellion against the old dark rule of hate. His own big heart, the feud of his friend and patron, Gavin Hamilton, whom the Session were oppressing on an affair of trivial moment, his own personal annoyance at "Daddy" Auld, the minister of Mauchline, under whose discipline he had quite justly passed, and especially his scorn for the hypocrisies of the dissolute, drunken, and dishonest miserable old elder "Holy Willie," made Burns unmerciful in the fray. Such was his environment, and such his provocations.

It is probably unquestionable that Holy Willie, the elder of unclean life, who dared to take in his hands the vessels of the Lord, and judge what names of better men should be retained or erased in holy books, thought himself a man of religion and of worth. Heaven pity him! The eye of the poet sees behind the thin pretence, hears falsehood in the hypocritic prayers, and nails him with a shaft

of ridicule to the kirk door for all generations of religious sneaks to see and fear!

Burns's exposure of him ceases to be personal, and becomes the exposure of his kind and class, at the same time condemning the narrow creed and jaundiced spiritual outlook of their period.

Now these and the like of them, in the pulpit or in the elders' pew, were not subjects that would appeal to beautiful poetry. On the contrary, they were broad marks for sarcastic invective, and they got it. Any rhymer could have hit them throwing a verse in the dark; but here this wide-eyed, open-hearted, clever child of flaming genius, electric in his sympathies, keen in his vision, and incisive as a sword-blade in his attack, simply over-mastered them with ridicule and laughter. Sombre and long-faced, how open did they lie to caricature. Just a little touch more red to the nebulous nose, a little more turn-down of the corners of the mouth, the chin pulled just the least bit longer, and there you have a figure of humbug pilloried on fun. And sometimes it is just the touch of exaggeration which makes the portrait immediately recognisable by the whole community which had perhaps grown long accustomed to the reality. What an eternal punishment, and what an eternal warning is the closing verse of the *Prayer*:

> "But, Lord, remember me and mine,
> Wi' mercies temporal and divine,
> That I for grace an' gear may shine
> Excell'd by nane;
> And a' the glory shall be Thine—
> Amen, amen!"

So, while, in the lava-scorching sarcasm of *Holy Willie's Prayer*, the false heart behind the false face is blasted at the church plate, the hypocrisy of Scotland's Holy Willies was laughed into its grave. No sneak dare stand up now in Scotland with sanctified selfishness as his religion, and hell is no longer peopled just with those who differ from us, or belong to other kirks, since he reminded us in his tingling verses of the proper standard, and the mercy of true godliness, with the very humanness of the love of God. You can make a hypocrite squirm yet if you just set him up with his back to *Holy Willie's Prayer*; it is an infallible measure of his kind It is the thirteenth chapter of Corinthians and the

fifth chapter of St Matthew put into Scottish sarcasm. A laughing philosopher, if you like, he was, but a laughing philosopher's philosophy must be rooted deep into truth, or the laugh and not the philosophy will abide.

And again he opens the door and lets a blast of the fresh air of human charity through the church's teaching in his day, clearing certain cobwebs of superstitious belief and practice which had gathered there. For religion in Scotland in Burns's time was brooded over by the stern shadow of a rigid predestination, and the spirit of it was really lost in the strict attention to its forms. Men were frightened into heaven by the terrors of a gloomy superstition. Theologians and theological squabblers of the day seemed to have set their hearts' affections, in regard at least to the souls of others, on the thought of hell rather than of heaven. This was no mere abstraction, no spiritual symbol of a sin-seared conscience, but a smoking reality, throbbing with the ache of myriad sinners, writhing in their punishment, and foul with the machinery of eternal discomforts poured upon them by a malignant divinity. The agonies of its torments exceeded the inventions of the most cruel wit of man, and yet, says Thomas Halyburton, with unconscious blasphemy: "Infinite wisdom has contrived that evil." Even the imagination of Thomas Boston cannot rise above his picture of "the damned, swimming in a lake of fire, burning with brimstone," which Halyburton supplements by the exhortation, "See the poor wretches lying in bundles, boiling eternally in that stream." Much of the imagery whereby this place of torment was described was absolutely pagan. It emanated from a system of thought which hung a blistering eternity, as a curse, not only at the heel of a sinner, like a galling red-hot chain, but as a doom of the poor little children unbaptized—the cruelest lie that ever entered into the heart of man. It served to make men, women, and children afraid of the ministers and elders, but it did not help in any way to make them love God the better. While this doctrine was meant to frighten people from sin, it also terrified them from heaven, driving some of them to suicide, and most into superstition, amid which men drew their awful God. In Binning's *Sermons* you find him glaring in hideous wrath. "There is nothing to be seen," he says, "but the terrible countenance of an angry God." He is

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an unkind deity, "He will, as it were," says Hutcheson, "lie in wait to take all advantages of sinners to undo them." Into this image they read their own sectarian dislike of one another, and shook the dreadful picture with groans above a credulous peasantry, till hope, love, and gratitude were driven out of many a simple heart.

They were dogged, too, by a terrible creation borrowed from popular lore of bogles and woodland spectres, and long ago baptized into the church, where Satan became an embodied bogle, a survival in form of the heathen satyr, a leering goat-legged monster, suffered by an ungracious deity to limp through countless mischiefs, leading weak women and men into temptations of witchcraft and warlockry, and making darkness and loneliness full of uncountable fears. Sometimes he appeared as a black dog, or a raven, and often as a black man, who yet never seemed to be able to hide his horns upon his head, or his cloven foot, split, I fancy, on the Commandments! Preachers did not hesitate to expatiate on the difficulties of evading his wiles, for now grown old he had grown the craftier with his years. He had been known to tempt even ministers, and the parish was kept in wholesome fear by the thought of him, while at his name in a sermon the church rang with groans of men and women.

Yet, as it were, all the while was he led on chain for the sport of the saints. For he was allowed to tempt humanity to sin, which won as its wage such punishment as made the angels glad to behold. Thus Jonathan Edwards wrote:

> "The damned shall be tormented in the presence of the Holy Angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; so will they be tormented also in the presence of the Glorified Saints."

And he goes on:

> "Hereby will the saints be made more sensible, how great their salvation is; the vision of the misery of the damned will double the ardour of the love and gratitude of the saints in heaven."

It is difficult to believe that men who wrote thus were good kindly Christians. Even Thomas Boston, in his *Fourfold State*, which was the book of the eighteenth century, talks of God holding up the wicked in hell-fire with one hand, while He tormented them with the other. Such statements would be a blasphemous slander on the lowest and most brutal humanity. By as much more, then, as eternity differs

from time, and God's glory from poor clay, is this the greater slander and calumny upon the loving Father whose pity for man could not rest in heaven. The big heart of the poet's father had turned from these doctrines and their teachers. And we find in his own little manual, which he drew up for his children, this statement:

> "We are to serve God out of love, for His perfections give us delightful prospects of His favour and friendship. . . . If we serve Him out of love we will endeavour to be like Him, and God will love His own image. . . . And if God love us He will rejoice over us to do us good."

The poet never lost that truth, which rang like a golden bell through the memory of his heart.

He longs to shake religion free from shams and corpse-cloth forms, and especially the muddle of hypocrisy, pride, and fuddle that made the "Holy Fairs," as the large gatherings were called at Communion times, a menace to morality and faith. He will shake faith free of these, though he have to shake them out with laughter. So Fun, Superstition, and Hypocrisy go linking with him to the scene, where sit

> "A chosen swatch
> With screw'd-up, grace-proud faces,"

while, on the skirts of the crowd and through it are loafing idle and leering men and women of no pure intention, using the opportunity of such a gathering, yet amazed if they were told that they have nothing of true faith in them. What a revelation of the narrow faithless faith of terror is in the scene when

> "Moodie speels the holy door
> Wi' tidings of damnation."

instead of the revelation of the pity of Christ for sinners.

Of course it is dangerous even to laugh at fanaticism. Before you laugh at evils in religion you must be sure of faith in yourself and others. If you fling out Superstition, you may have to shut the door so quickly that you may shut out Religion herself coming in out of the dark. Some anchor is needed for the soul—even if it be only some old weed-covered stone that has been lying all the while on the shingle at your feet. For Burns, that old stone was the true manliness of the heart which scorned humbug and pretence, fearing no face but God's.

To the chord of satire he added the spirit of true fun.

It seemed as if a new muse of laughter without a sting in it had come to Scotland. The church of his time had been so busy threatening men with hell and filling religion with fears, making Satan's hate and not God's love the motive of true new life, that honest laughter was reckoned an indecent hussie, as in some places she is reckoned yet, where a long face and a bitter word at another sect seem passports to grace, though they can never be passports to heaven here and hereafter. Burns slammed the door on these things and their worshippers. "God made the world fair, and I will be merry if I care, while in it." As, therefore, he had taken the duplicities, the whited-sepulchreisms, and the bloated charlatanries and quackeries in faith and knowledge, and, having knocked their heads together, left them in petrified punishment-robes of scorn for ever, nailed to the church door with a shaft of laughter, so now he took the whimsicalities of our national nature, our mixtures of religion and work, of faith and fuddle, with the humours and superstitions of rustic life, and mixed them together in a magic cauldron, brimming and bubbling over with mirth, sometimes with a weird flame flickering upon it.

Take that king of bacchanalian dramas of low life, *The Jolly Beggars*, when

> "the merry core
> O' randie, gangrel bodies"

meet, in congenial revel, in "Poosie Nansie's." What power of painting, insight of character, and realism of grouping! There, through the ages, the reckless outcasts sing their songs, and flaunt their rags, and what a lesson they are to us all! Just see how shivery the night:

> "When lyart leaves bestrow the yird,
> Or, wavering like the bauckie-bird,
> Bedim cauld Boreas' blast;
> When hailstanes drive wi' bitter skyte,
> And infant frosts begin to bite,
> In hoary cranreuch drest;
> Ae night at e'en a merry core
> O' randie, gangrel bodies
> In Poosie-Nansie's held the splore,
> To drink their orra duddies:
> Wi' quaffing and laughing
> They ranted an' they sang,
> Wi' jumping an' thumping
> The vera girdle rang."

The sudden transition from the cold, frost-driven night into the steaming heat of Poosie Nansie's kitchen, and the shouting, shameless duddy crew roaring their dirling choruses, is a dramatic triumph. Merry for the hour, and sheltered from the blast—to-morrow the open road, the biting heath, and the empty hunger again across the moors, and, somewhere else than Nansie's, the same roaring choruses—till the wind and the rain beat on their up-turned faces, away from the haunts of men, where such as they lie down to die, forgotten and unknown. What a picture! What a lesson! What a dive into the depths behind the heart!

The same character-painting is to be found in that inimitable *Hallowe'en*. You remember the picture of auld grannie when

"Wee Jenny to her grannie says,
'Will ye go wi' me, grannie?
I'll eat the apple at the glass,
I gat frae Uncle Johnie':
She fuff't her pipe wi' sic a lunt,
In wrath she was sae vap'rin,
She notic't na an aizle brunt
Her braw, new, worset apron
Out thro' that night."

Or old Uncle John

"wha wedlock's joys
Sin, Mar's-year did desire,
Because he gat the toom dish thrice,
He heav'd them on the fire
In wrath that night."

Here, too, we see the old immemorial superstitions, handed down from the most remote of our ancestors, with all the coy and yet eager tempting of the future, so full of attraction for the simple hearts; while in the open air such a burn is slipping on to the sea as could only be a Scottish burn, and described by a Scottish poet:

"Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,
As thro' the glen it wimpl't;
Whyles round a rocky scaur it strays,
Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't;
Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,
Wi' bickerin', dancin' dazzle;
Whyles cockit underneath the braes,
Below the spreading hazel
Unseen that night."

This poem is full of the richest character painting. Take, just culling at random, "fechtin' Jamie Fleck," as he goes forth to perform the Hallowe'en charm of sowing hemp-seed. Bold at all other times, for face of man he never fears, his heart now is throbbing wild and loud enough in conscience:

"He whistl'd up *Lord Lenox' March*,
To keep his courage cheery;
Altho' his hair began to arch,
He was sae fley'd and eerie;
Till presently he hears a squeak,
An' then a grane an' gruntle;
He by his shouther gae a keek,
An' tumbled wi' a wintle
Out-owre that night.

"He roared a horrid murder-shout,
In dreadfu' desperation!
An' young an' auld come rinnin' out,
To hear the sad narration:
He swore 'twas hilchin Jean M'Craw,
Or crouchie Merran Humphie—
Till stop! she trotted thro' them a';
An' wha was it but grumphie
Asteer that night?"

That, with such charming pictures as *Duncan Gray* and *Last May a Braw Wooer cam' doon the lang Glen*, give beautiful reflections of the simple life, looked at through the windows of humour and set to the music of honest laughter.

His *Tam o' Shanter* is unrivalled in Scottish poetry. In it the low comedy of life, the descriptive, the ludicrous, the terrible, are united and interchanged. Terse, vigorous elasticity of verse, with apt simile, striking epithet, and wonderful dramatic painting, make it the most remarkable mirror of life and character in any poet of our land. Witness the fearful associations with points in Tam's route. He has to pass by:

"Whare in the snaw the chapman smoor'd;
And past the birks and meikle stane,
Whare drunken Charlie brak's neck-bane;
And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,
Whare hunters fand the murder'd bairn;
And near the thorn, aboon the well,
Whare Mungo's mither hang'd hersel'."

Then the horrible collection of curios, which he beholds in the assembly in Alloway Kirk, laid, in mockery of holier rites, on the sacred table :

> " A murderer's banes, in gibbet-airns ;
> Twa span-lang, wee, unchristen'd bairns ;
> A thief, new-cutted frae a rape—
> Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape ;
> Five tomahawks, wi' bluid red-rusted ;
> Five scymitars wi' murder crusted ;
> A garter which a babe had strangled ;
> A knife a father's throat had mangled,—
> Whom his ain son o' life bereft—
> The grey hairs yet stack to the heft : "

The dramatic introduction alone would lift a man high in the list of descriptive writers.

As for *Tam o' Shanter* and *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, the one represents the fears that haunted the field and fell, in the darkness ; the other gives one of the holiest pictures of fireside religion which the soul can ever hope to see, flooded with spiritual light.

The humour, of course, of *Tam o' Shanter* is unsurpassed and unparalleled. And oh, the sarcasms hid beneath the play! Look into the significance of the revel of hell's children, the warlocks and witches, and the regiment of the curst which, largely through the teaching of ecclesiastics, had become embodied terrors, being held within the holy walls of the kirk. Even the hideous sadness of the " twa span-lang, wee, unchristen'd bairns," whom religious superstition had handed over to Satan's keeping, what a judgment-stroke upon a narrow cruel creed was that. For still the narrow religiosity of the bigots clung to the horrid superstition of the homeless namelessness of the unbaptized. How the poet cried out there against the dictum which had clouded many a loving mother's heart with ceaseless sorrow—a dogma scriptureless, gospelless, Christless.

To touch a thing like that, and let the lurid fire of scathing humour play upon it, lifted the poet far above the risk of being taken for a mere sneering mocker at human life and at sacred things. What will not yield to argument will yield to scorn, but it takes a great man to be a laughing preacher of the true meanings of things. No atheist sneer is here. The man whose infinite pity trembles like a tear along his laughter

was the man most fitted to draw with loving hand his country's simple faith, which made her children once great enough to die for God, as erstwhile they had died for freedom.

He took up the chord of Nature-love, and gave new sound to it, and set new strings quivering beside it. Where others before him had but spoken of Nature, and told what she was like, tracing her beauty hazily as in a glass dimmed by their own breathing, he looked her in the face, and she took him by the hand and spoke to him as an angel would speak to a soul found weeping in the wilds. The birds had meanings for him; the flowing streams had songs for him; the upturned daisy was a prophecy of his own fate:

> "Alas! it's no thy neebor sweet,
> The bonie lark, companion meet,
> Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet,
> Wi' spreckl'd breast!
> When upwards-springing, blythe, to greet
> The purpling east."

And, when his heart is breaking, he wonders that all these fair companions can still be "fresh and fair," and calm and singing. "Thou mellow mavis that hails the nicht-fa'," "thou laverock that springs frae the dew o' the morn, give over for pity." He is a bit of the world itself. He is brother of the beauty of things, this man who went out from the furrows where song had touched him when following the plough, to walk the slippery way where the life of his times was walking, and he fell, and could not hide his feet that were clay, though his wings were golden.

In poverty, when he could have made money by his songs, tempted, indeed, but vainly, to write bawdily for cash, he poured out from his heart freely, "for Scotland's sake," songs that are now and always the abiding pride of his native land. Alongside of that set the grey picture of him walking on the shadow side of the street in Dumfries on the day of the Assembly, while on the other passed, unnoticing, those who had used him for their amusement in his prodigy days —neglected, unheeded; and when MacCulloch of Ardwell went over, dismounted, and like a brave man stood beside him, asking why thus he walked alone, he looked at his

questioner with a sad half-smile and said: "Nay, my friend, that's all over now.

> "'O were we young as we ance ha'e been,
> We sud ha'e been galloping down on yon green,
> And linking it over the lily white lea,
> And werena my heart licht I wad dee.'"

The light heart, alas! was breaking, and only in his thirty-eighth year, this man, who had been left by his near contemporaries on the shadow side, having forgotten how difficult it was for him to walk in the slippery ways, and guide his tongue through the vocabulary of patronage, having fallen, and known it, in bitterness of soul, died poor and in fear of the bailiff, but having achieved by his better and higher nature an unfading immortality in the remembrance of mankind.

An objection has been made to the poet Burns being considered a Christian teacher, because he had not explicitly declared himself as a believer in Jesus Christ. Of course that is a narrow and wrong position. If only those who sign a creed are Christians, then there will be select company in heaven. If we find a man running after arrant hypocrisy and humbug, if we find a heart pelting with sarcasm or any other weapon which he may have found lying to his hand, sneakery and hypocrisy, oppression and baseness, we should not ask him what creed he had acknowledged or what church he attended. For there are countless doors to the kingdom of heaven besides the door of the church that you and I go to. We prefer to follow the conclusion of Dean Stanley, who described Burns as a wise religious teacher. Men absolutely mistake the function of a poet if they think that in order to be a Christian poet a man must first of all formulate a king of Westminster Confession. Our best Christian poets, who have led crowds into the very presence of Love Divine, have frequently only known the yearning for God, the sorrow of humanity, and the sadness of sin.

Again, it has been said that, in refusing to acknowledge Burns as a Christian teacher, what is called the "beautiful tribute to Christian doctrine" which the poet pays in *The Cotter's Saturday Night* is not forgotten. Now this is just what the poet does not do; and it is also the secret of the abiding strength of this beautiful poem that it is not an enunciation of Christian doctrine, but a touching and

pathetic representation of a simple Christian life, entirely removed and breathing altogether apart from the distractions of the formulated creed-makers and theological upholsterers of the period in which it was written. A restriction like that imposed by unimaginative persons would confine the term Christian teacher mostly to the professors of a theological college, while the Christians would only be communicants of their own kirk. This is, after all, not very far from the hard and fast narrowness which Christ gripped and shook out of religion long ago. There are thousands of lives that never yet formulated a theological opinion, and could not, if they were summoned to Judgment Day, declare any doctrine for which men have hated each other on earth, but could only give as their creed that they loved their fellowmen, and believed in the pity of God for sinners, in the hate of God and man for smug hypocrisy and pretence, and in the eternalness of beauty, goodness, and truth. Now that is as big a creed as many a church declares, and the man who teaches these things is on the side of Christ.

Of course, we must remember that sometimes, running after Superstition, and chasing smug pretence out of the house of God, a man may stumble into the ditch himself. Flinging a stone at a hypocrite, you may break the window of the church. The sweep of your arm at a humbug may hit an apostle on the mouth, in such a crowded place as the world is; but the man who risks it is the truest man, and the apostle himself would be the first to acknowledge that they were both on the same side. As Burns himself said:

> "All hail, Religion, maid divine,
> Pardon a muse sae mean as mine,
> Who, in her rough imperfect line,
> Thus dares to name thee.
> To stigmatize false friends of thine
> Can ne'er defame thee."

The catching of hypocrisy by the back of the neck, as Burns did, and shaking it out like a rag on the winds of laughter which blow round about the corners of churches, did more good in the way of ventilation of ecclesiastical life, and was more effectually on the side of clean hands and a pure heart on the part of those who bore holy vessels, than any sermon.

The poet Fergusson, in his *Farmer's Ingle*, which nobody reads nowadays, much to the loss of both Scottish life and Scottish literature, gives with magical touches a picture of the common life lived at the firesides of the sturdy Scottish yeomen in his time. Outside there is the wild wind, and the hill-tops are sprinkled with snow under the frosty starlight. The weary cattle are in the byre, the tired horses in the stable, and the farmer and his people sit round the fireside talking of the day's work, and the work of the day that is coming, whispering of the old superstitions, the churchyard ghosts, the fortunes and misfortunes of themselves and their friends, till slumber claims them. But Fergusson was deficient in the religious sense. He knew the life of tavern laughter, and the struggle for a living, but he had not the deep places behind the heart, nor the spiritual insight of Burns, nor the memory of holy fireside scenes, which, like a picture, hung on the screen of his remembrance, on the background of his soul.

Burns is thrilled with a deep pathetic love of the home life :

> "To mak' a happy fireside clime
> For weans and wife,—
> That's the true pathos and sublime
> Of human life."

But the secret of such happiness lies in the hearts of home, and in that Presence high above their fields, yet ever near their needs. In *The Cotter's Saturday Night* he draws aside the screen and lets us see it. There by the humble fire, under the roof of thatch, is a heart that can touch the skirts of God, and when he kneels with his family round him, that poor clay floor becomes holy ground. Haply the door may open as they kneel, and One who knew of a poor home in the hills afar, stand listening on the threshold.

Perhaps no one, even in our own land, before *The Cotter's Saturday Night* was written, believed or dreamed that such beauty could be cast around a simple home, making each Scottish fireside the altar of the living God, each humble clay floor the holiest spot on earth.

Religion to this man is not a thing of words, profession, or appearance. It is the true life, and every bit of life true, a thing not only of the church, but of the shop, the counter, and the bench, word and work together in genuine

manly truth, found in Gavin Hamilton rather than in his persecutors :

"The poor man's friend in need,
The gentleman in word and deed."

He hates their sectarian littleness :

"God knows, I'm no the thing I should be,
Nor am I even the thing I could be,
But twenty times I rather would be
An atheist clean
Than under gospel colours hid be
Just for a screen."

An honest man, he cries, may have his failings :

"But mean revenge an' malice fause
He'll still disdain.

"They take Religion in their mouth,
They talk o' Mercy, Grace, an' Truth :
For what? To gie their malice skouth
On some puir wight ;
An' hunt him down, o'er right an' ruth,
To ruin straight."

He looks for the secret of life higher than anything the world can give. He finds the kingdom of God within :

"It's no in titles nor in rank,
It's no in wealth like Lon'on bank
To purchase peace and rest :
It's no in makin' muckle mair,
It's no in books, its no in lear,
To make us truly blest.
If happiness hae not her seat,
And centre in the breast.
We may be wise, or rich, or great,
But never can be blest,
Nae treasures, nor pleasures
Could make us happy lang,
The heart aye's the part aye
That makes us right or wrang."

Truth in the heart lifts a man into the hearts of others ; and what if that which lifts us into the hearts of our fellow-men will lift us into God's heart ? Learning does not secure this, nor soft seats and lives of ease :

"Gie me ae spark o' Nature's fire,
That's a' the learning I desire,
Then tho' I drudge thro' dub and mire,
At pleugh or cart,
My muse, though hamely in attire,
May touch the heart."

Ay, poet, out on the windy leas, you carry your own weather with you! What an alphabet has Nature for you and yours, in the fields and the woodlands, the birds and the streams, and the secret knock for the door of all hearts in the world. For him the sordid and the selfish are aliens from heaven's purpose, outside the scheme of God:

"For thus the royal mandate ran
When first the human race began,
The social friendly honest man,
Whate'er he be,
'Tis he fulfils great Nature's plan,
And none but he."

He knows earthly delights; but he knows how they abide not. They are no end in themselves:

"Pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed,
Or like the snow falls in the river,
A moment white—then melts for ever."

He knows, too, the bitterness of lonely thought:

"Here ambushed by the chimla cheek,
Hid in an atmosphere o' reek. . . .
I sit and count my sins by chapters."

Sad chapters! Their headings written in bitter tears!

Pity, big universal pity, is the heart of all his creed. In midst of his own agonizings he remembers the miseries of every creature:

"I thought me on the ourie cattle,
Or silly sheep wha bide the brattle,
O' wintry war.
Or through the drift, deep-lairing sprattle
Beneath a scaur.

"Ilk hopping bird—wee helpless thing,
That in the merry months o' spring,
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee?
Where wilt thou cower the chittering wing
And close thy e'e?"

And when his ploughshare breaks up the home of the field-mouse:

"Wee sleekit, cow'rin, tim'rous beastie."

amid his pity prophecy unveils his sight :

"Still art thou blest compared wi' me !
The present only toucheth thee.
But oh, I backward cast my ee
On prospects drear,
And forward, though I cannot see,
I guess and fear."

Even the sweet mountain daisy upturned in the sod shines with the dew of his pity.

He finds, indeed, in Nature, and in the heart's response to her beauty, hints, questionings, and portents of more than the eye can see and measure. He says :

"I never hear the loud solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of grey plover in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion. . . . Do these workings argue something within us above the trodden clod?"

In his *Epistle to a Young Friend*, you find a chart of life. He warns him against too simple trust in men :

"You'll find mankind an unco squad,
And muckle they may grieve ye."

Yet friendship is a true thing, and money is not its measure :

"A man may tak' a neebor's part,
Yet ha'e nae cash to spare him."

Honest work and its wage, he holds, are honourable and justifiable :

"To catch Dame Fortune's golden smile,
Assiduous wait upon her ;
And gather gear by ev'ry wile
That's justified by honor :
Not for to hide it in a hedge,
Nor for a train-attendant ;
But for the glorious privilege
Of being independent."

What then was the issue of it ? He tore asunder darkness and superstition, letting light flood the heart. He worked a reformation in religion, though he does not stand in stained glass in the church ; for he made hypocrisy tremble in the pulpit and in the pews. And he helps from his grave to widen liberty. So often is he a sinning angel, with

beauty in his wings, and his lips stained with passion, so strong in him alike are the human and the divine, that each must have its period of dominion. His apparent recklessness and defiance were really shame, sorrow, bitter pain of penitence, and pride, together mingled as he hid the scars of conscience with a smile.

Bloomfield, the poet, gives us the clue to him when he says:

"The illustrious soul that has left amongst us the name of Burns has often been lowered down to a comparison with me; but the comparison exists more in circumstances than in essentials. That man stood up with the stamp of superior intellect on his brow, a visible greatness. I have neither his fire to fan, or to quench, nor his passions to control. Where, then, is my merit, if I make a peaceful voyage, upon a smooth sea, and with no mutiny on board?"

The very blaze of the fire within him blinded him, and he stumbled till he got again his sight. His own epitaph is true:

"Misled by Fancy's meteor ray,
By passion driven,
But yet the light that led astray
Was light from heaven."

The true gauge is the heart; the true judgment, charity.

"Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
Decidedly can try us;
He knows each chord, its various tone—
Each spring, its various bias.

"Then at the balance let's be mute,
We never can adjust it;
What's done we partly may compute,
But kenna what's resisted."

The world appreciates heroisms. The greatest coward feels a thrill as he hears of the forlorn hope, and the frowning bastion; and the man who dare not speak his mind lest he lose his situation feels his breath come quickly when a bold word leaps up, like a soaring lark, above the level of the dumb multitude. This is what gives Burns his grip upon the remembrance of his fellow countrymen.

In literature, as in anything else, it is the voice which has its own tone, the foot-beat which has its own distinctive

pulse, and the cry which has its own vibration, that men do not forget. The critic whose chief implements are his own five fingers counting syllables on his knee, may condemn what he does not understand, because he may not hitherto have seen or heard it; but thought, and the truth enclosed within it, are sometimes independent of all the rules formulated up to date. The dancing muse, moving to familiar measures, may, in the middle of an orthodox step, lift her foot higher, or kick it out further than the regulation standard, and a new beat be brought thus into the rhythm of the orchestra. It is all vain for the little dancing-master, indignant at the irregularity, to stop his fiddling, which, in his conceit, he thought was guiding the dancer's rhapsody. She can dance independently of earthly music. Yet, if her interpreter in human rhythm and phrase dares to follow her impulse, carrying the spell of her rapture out over the entanglements of rules and measures and the established principles of yesterday, he will run the risk, at least, of a bad impression on the part of hundreds who have no music in their souls. Burns dared to declare this as a fact in relation to himself:

"I am nae poet, in a sense,
But just a rhymer, like by chance,
And ha'e to learning nae pretence,
Yet what the matter?
Whene'er my muse does on me glance,
I jingle at her.

"Your critic folk may cock their nose,
And say, 'How can you e'er propose,
You, wha ken hardly verse frae prose,
To mak' a sang?'
But, by your leaves, my learned foes,
Ye're maybe wrang."

An academic singer, familiar with the experiments in poetic form, will be apt, if he felt a desire to express himself in verse, to follow a method of utterance as if by diagram. On the other hand, the singer whose soul is spontaneously touched into utterance by the environment of Nature, untrammelled by art, will not confine himself to coasting along charted shores whose soundings are familiar. He will not only venture in channels which might be counted dangerous, but his fragile shallop may be blown out of sight

of the familiar, and carried to islands of mystical witchery, beaten upon by wave-music which no heart has ever heard before. The former will have culture, with knowledge of poetic commonplace in form and phrase, setting sometimes very plain stones in exquisite jewel-work. The latter may set out his thoughts like a dancing faun, tying garnets and nuggets of unhandled gold around her neck, with the grasses of the wilderness; and often, as if some sunny-mouthed artist from fairyland had hammered music out upon a stithy of dream, the herd or the ploughman, up among lonely places and beside the marshes, will fling forth a thing all lyrical in impulse, with words tender and delicate as the leaves of wild roses changed into singing. See what a touch-stone of poetic verbal collocation is Burns's verse:

> "Yestreen as to the trembling string
> The dance gaed doon the lighted ha'."

It pulls apart, as by the very finger of music, the screen from imagination's windows.

He knew, also, the value of Nature mysticism—the face to face inspiration of the mountain tracks, the green glens, and the harping of the winds upon the pines:

> "The Muse, nae poet, ever fand her,
> Till by himsel' he learn'd to wander,
> Adown some trotting burn's meander,
> And no think lang;
> Oh, sweet to stray, and pensive ponder
> A heart-felt sang!"

Burns has many heroisms which keep him remembered. He had, especially, independence of outlook. He was not afraid to take up life in its purely human aspect. The girls he admired and sang about were not dressed-up china dolls, nor court beauties carrying crooks tied about with silk ribands. They were clothed in human grace, yet the sunshine of the hillside made halos about their hair, and the light that played about the stream, twisting its music seawards through the glens, flashed in song-awakening wonder from the eyes that looked in his.

The poetry of the eighteenth century was largely a kind of college essay set to rhyme. It had to flow smoothly, with a bell that rung when each line was completed. Well-fed men in comfortable houses told other well-fed men in rhyme

the secrets of the happy life, or how to attain old age, or else sang, in hymn-tune measure, of hermits and deserted maidens. There were, of course, singers hungry and bare enough, whose passion and flame were not quenched by the rain that dripped through the attic roof, and who were glad to sell their souls for a stationer's pittance, or to linger about the doors of great men's kitchens on the chance of a tip for a dedication, and the patronage of flunkeys. Their only hope of any success was if they clothed their passion in the orthodox garments of fashionable poetic society, hiding the shining wings of the muse, and blinding Pegasus till he hobbled like any other hack in Rotten Row. But Burns knew what kind of steed was his, and dared to declare it:

> "My spaviet Pegasus will limp,
> Till ance he's fairly het;
> And then he'll hilch, and stilt, and jimp,
> And rin an unco fit."

He had the heroism of unconventionality, not only in thought but in form. Not, of course, that he had it always. Nevertheless, he had not many moments of failure, though he had his seasons of humdrumness, when he set his thought to other men's music. *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, that picture of the holiest phase of Scottish peasant life, set to Spenserian measure, was perhaps as daring a thing as any he attempted. Yet one can hardly help feeling as if, in this, the Scottish muse in court dress is a little conscious of her apparel. Still the experiment was full of characteristic daring. For a ploughman farmer to ask the world to stop, to come away from the paved streets, and the polished drawing-rooms, across the miry fields, to stand for a little under the lea of the clay-built cottage in order to look in through the pane upon a peasant's communion with God, was a huge request. He had the heroic daring to make it, and men's hearts were touched as with the hand of Moses, and hushed with a holy quiet unfelt before.

His was also the renown of giving the struggle of the poor a new voice. The muse that has looked in the eye of eternal truth, and is familiar with the invisible source of things ere she comes amongst men, knows quite well that, in the matter of final measurements, success or failure in money-mongering counts for nothing. Yet it is not reckoned, even to-

day, safe, or at least prudent, to declare this fact; successful speculation being looked upon almost as equivalent to charity in its covering effect. Burns was a pioneer in daring to declare the worth of the soul beyond a bank account, and the higher efficacy of character instead of cash as the measure of man. His challenge makes the blood-beat quicken still:

"Is there for honest poverty
That hings his head, an' a' that?
The coward slave, we pass him by—
We dare be poor for a' that! . . .
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
The man's the gowd for a' that."

He dared to sing as he saw and felt. He marched to his own music, and gave others, who were tired of what had no fire in it, new marching tunes. The weak and despairing rise even yet upon their elbow to hail such heroism with a cheer, and hearts that are sick in the wind and the rain learn to forget the oppressions of poverty, touched to new hope by the sunshine of his invincible optimistic manliness.

CHAPTER XXIX

SCOTT

BURNS wrote his name large, not only upon the records of the life and poetry of Scotland, but on the scroll of the literature of the world. And along with his shines another Scottish name, that of Sir Walter, the "Wizard of the North," who, however, gave Scotland a place among the nations in right of its literature.

1771-1832.

It was after his marriage that he felt his way out into a wider sphere for his genius than the Bar afforded him. Percy's *Reliques* had moved his imagination deeply with abiding effect. His translation of Bürger's *Lenoré* and *The Wild Huntsman* in 1796 was his double knock upon the door. Though known to the community of the Borders as "the Shirra" of Selkirkshire, after 1799, he was soon known in another character, for in 1802 appeared the *Border Minstrelsy*. The influence of this work appeared in his *Proud Maisie:*

"Proud Maisie is in the wood,
Walking so early;
Sweet Robin sits on the bush,
Singing so rarely.

"'Tell me, thou bonny bird,
When shall I marry me?'—
'When six braw gentlemen
Kirkward shall carry ye.'

"'Who makes the bridal bed,
Birdie say truly?'—
'The grey-headed sexton
That delves the grave duly.

"'The glow-worm o'er grave and stone
Shall light thee steady.
The owl from the steeple sing,
Welcome, proud lady.'"

His ballad of Harlaw, also, which he put in the mouth of the old crone in Mucklebackit's cottage, is astir with movement and historic truth, and owed a great debt undoubtedly to his experience among the works of the older minstrels.

In 1802 he had begun his *Lay of the Last Minstrel* with the intention of making it a third volume of the *Minstrelsy*; but its growth soon gave it a title to a place of its own. Its origin was due to the suggestion of the Countess of Dalkeith that a ballad should be written about a Border legend of Gilpin Horner, and a little enforced leisure through the kick of a horse gave Scott the opportunity for stretching out the ballad into a canto. It was the hint of Pegasus by proxy. The weaknesses of the poem are evident. The mountain and river spirits and their dialogue are "wersh," jejune, and artificial. The whole structure of the supernatural is scaffolding, and not a part of the building. But very few bits of 'prentice work have such excelling merits, such vivid activity, such transcription into rhythm and poetic feeling of actual history and folk legend as the *Lay* displayed. It spoke, further, in a voice new and different from the poetry that held the moment's vogue, and yet not as Wordsworth's poetry did, according to a certain specific theory. It spoke out of its author's most native feelings in regard to the romantic and national facts that moved him. His moss-troopers are not far from being Crusaders in leather jacks, but they galloped as true men would gallop, and the beat of their horses' feet broke the jog of the school of Pope into a new measure. Its success is one of the phenomena of literature, and confirmed him in his enterprise, though at first it was not poetry he intended as his end in life. He had his eye upon the Highlands at the same time, and spoke of a "kind of companion to the Minstrel Lay," embodying the ancient manners of that secluded district, practically unknown to the rest of Scotland, and, indeed, not considered as holding much of interest at all, until the Wizard's spell opened the eyes of men. He set, however, to work upon *Marmion*, which appeared in 1808. Jeffrey, with his usual *pince-nez* manner, declared that it was perhaps clearer that this poem had defects than that it had beauties. The main defect, from the poetic point of view, was the blot on the scutcheon of the chief figure. The crime of forgery naturally struck a lawyer as a possible stain on the hero, and was one away

out of the beaten track. It unchivalrized him, however. It was not a crime of strength, but of meanness. The power of the poem, its compact force, its majesty, and open-eyed-ness make it worthy of perhaps the highest place in his poetic work, lifting it above its blemish. The battle-piece remains in the first place of such descriptive work, in English poetry, at any rate, unchallenged.

His *Lady of the Lake* was his most popular poem. It appealed not only to the Scottish people, but to those across the Border. It opened up a new vista of romantic and scenic interest. It was not only a good tale well told, but its setting was excellingly picturesque, the mountain and the flood, the wild and majestic, the mystical and awful, combining to give it a place of its own in imaginative and descriptive literature. It is a carping spirit that would complain of the harper being but a reproduction of the minstrel. A picture of Highland life would have been incomplete without Allan-bane. It might as well be suggested that the clan battle was only an imitation of the greater masterpiece in *Marmion*. Such things are the impertinences of criticism. The appeal of the poem was more direct than *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, for it dealt with existing manners, and its force was such that it drew people out of their wonted tracks, and turned the feet of English travellers northwards to the wild and lonely places. Its lines got in among the traffic of the world, and not only opened the eyes of the dwellers in our island to the beauties at home, but taught them how to appreciate the beauties of other lands.

The difference between *The Lady of the Lake* and *Rokeby* lies, among other things, in the different way in which natural scenery is treated in each. In the former he drew his pictures *currente calamo*; in the latter he jotted in a note-book a catalogue of the points of scenery, and worked up from his list the backgrounds and environments of the piece. The effect of this method is entirely evident throughout.

Scott represented in poetry a very different point of view in spirit and feeling from those which permeated the poetry of Coleridge and Wordsworth, whose souls were kindled by the enthusiasm awakened by the Fall of the Bastille in 1789. They looked over the ruined walls, and

thought they saw the glory of liberty rising through a magic dawn. The form of development which followed, however, under the guidance of Napoleon, estranged even poetic sympathy, and, as has been pointed out by Mr Stopford Brooke, Waterloo was not only a historical but a poetical pivot. Scott saw in the Revolution the passing of the glories of chivalry, the glamour of romance. So he dipped his brush in the gold of the setting sun, and every one of his pictures has the pathos of half-forgotten things about it. His Border streams run seaward with a sobbing undertone. He looks regretfully over his shoulder at the sunset land of "Never! never!" which he has to leave behind. His greatest work deals with what is gone or going. And that was why his *Lay of the Last Minstrel* struck a deep response in the heart of the nation. Men were beginning to think the old was better than the new. The terrible dance of death which had reeled in blood through France—the ghastly murder-song of the guillotine—the

> "Nunc est bibendum, nunc pede libero
> Pulsanda tellus,"

of the mob, all dripping red, as it clattered in its wooden-shoed *carmagnole*, shocked the fluttering hopes of a Golden Age out of every heart in Europe. So Scott's tale of ancient knightly legend found a ready audience deeply sympathetic with his point of view. The final reaction from the revolutionary awakening meant for poetry either new themes or silence; and with Scott it was the latter. He found his muse grown unresponsive, the tides of poetic inspiration ebbed far away, and so he turned to another world of phantasy, wherein he made himself lord indisputable in his sway.

As Ruskin pointed out truly, Scott was sad. But Ruskin suggests wrongly that this was because the age was sad. The age was tired, but it was her poets who were sad, and this because they lived in a time of transition. A transition period in which there is a look before and after, a leaving of the known for the unknown, a dismantling of the old for the habilitation of the new, is always, for a thinker, a time of perplexity and regret and questioning. There is loneliness about a thinker then. He feels himself often apart from the movement that is going on around him; he stands

in mid-stream of the parting of the waters. Scott's poetic provocation was the fading into the land of tender memory, where death is king, of the romantic, the chivalrous, and everything that had been panoplied in the splendid pomp of the heraldic and battlemented life of the past. He turned, therefore, to another inspiration, and found in the human heart, in the life of his people, that vast and varied experience which has an unsetting present. In his novels, more than ever in his poems, he touched the chord of the universal, blending the past with the present.

Scott lost his sadness when he looked into the face of Nature, apart from man, and from his own emotions and experiences. The silver strand running out into the caress of the shining waters of the Highland loch had no sorrow in it. His muse with

> "foot unsandall'd loves to tread
> Where the soft greensward is inlaid
> With varied moss and thyme . . .
> The murmur dear
> Of the wild brook hath caught her ear,
> The glade hath caught her eye;
> She longs to join with each blithe rill
> That dances down the Highland hill
> Her blither melody."

It was thus he bade farewell for a while to the shadow that crept at his heels, the pensive mood that grew into his character through his early delicacy and the presence of the old tower that brooded over his growing childhood at Sandyknowe. When he set himself or other men into Nature's environment, he was apt to carry the mist of life's questioning sorrows thither also.

In his *Lord of the Isles* and in *Rokeby* we feel the muse limping, the song faltering, the vision growing dim. *Harold the Dauntless*, *The Bridal of Triermain*, and the rest, are swatches of the same web, but the golden thread of glamour which had been used hitherto for the stitching was his no longer. There is an occasionally deeper insight into humanity in *Rokeby*; in fact, as has been pointed out by Charles Reade, the novelist, a new touch of psychological surgery may be seen when Bertram is meditating the murder of Mortham. The death-dealing impulse is almost arrested

by the thought, not of the benefits he had received, but of those which he himself had bestowed:

"I thought on Darien's deserts pale,
Where death bestrides the evening gale;
How o'er my friend my cloak I threw,
And fenceless faced the deadly dew;
I thought on Quariana's cliff,
Where, rescued from our foundering skiff,
Through the white breakers' wrath I bore
Exhausted Mortham to the shore;
And when his side an arrow found,
I suck'd the Indian's venom'd wound.
These thoughts like torrents rush'd along,
To sweep away my purpose strong."

This touch revealed the growth of that insight into human nature which reached in the novels a fulness unsurpassed. In *Rokeby* his lyrical genius manifested itself with exquisite power. The following, especially, has been so frequently quoted that it is almost superfluous to repeat the experiment; but the temptation is irresistible. It is a retouch of an early fragment, and every line of it has the fragrance of musk and old rose leaves. Burns laid his transfiguring hand upon it also; but Scott's version stands alone in pathetic beauty:

"A weary lot is thine, fair maid,
A weary lot is thine!
To pull the thorn thy brow to braid,
And press the rue for wine!
A lightsome eye, a soldier's mien,
A feather of the blue,
A doublet of the Lincoln green—
No more of me you knew,
My love!
No more of me you knew.

"This morn is merry June, I trow,
The rose is budding fain;
But she shall bloom in winter's snow,
Ere we two meet again.
He turn'd his charger as he spake,
Upon the river shore,
He gave his bridle reins a shake,
Said, Adieu for evermore,
My love!
And adieu for evermore."

At least one other thing remains as proof of his mastery of lyric expression, with a heart-deep throb of piteousness in it surely unsurpassed :

"The sun upon the Weirdlaw Hill,
In Ettrick's vale, is sinking sweet ;
The westland wind is hush and still,
The lake lies sleeping at my feet.
Yet not the landscape to mine eye
Bears those bright hues that once it bore ;
Though evening, with her richest dye,
Flames o'er the hills of Ettrick's shore.

"With listless look along the plain,
I see Tweed's silver current glide,
And coldly mark the holy fane
Of Melrose rise in ruined pride.
The quiet lake, the balmy air,
The hill, the stream, the tower, the tree—
Are they still such as once they were?
Or is the dreary change in me?

"Alas, the warp'd and broken board,
How can it bear the painter's dye!
The harp of strain'd and tuneless chord,
How to the minstrel's skill reply!
To aching eyes each landscape lowers,
To feverish pulse each gale blows chill ;
And Araby's or Eden's bowers
Were barren as this moorland hill."

His *Bonnie Dundee* gallops, with jingle of bridle-chain and shout of brave men, to whatso fate awaits the dauntless ; the tramp of a marching host goes on through *Ettrick and Teviotdale ;* the rush of the Highland charge runs like a flame through the heather in the *Pibroch o' Donuil Dhu* still. The verve of native fire, the glamour of the native weird and awful aspects of lonely life and lonesome places, the sheen of the sunlight on bosky brake and stretching waters among the mountain solitudes remote, the moving passion of human life, with doom running breathlessly beside it, these are uniquely his own. It has been claimed for *Rokeby* that it is his best long poem ; but it lacks in all these what *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, *Marmion*, and *The Lady of the Lake* possess as a whole. One feels somehow that it was used in the building up of some of the mock-

mediæval turrets of the tragedy of Abbotsford. It is as unspontaneous a growth as they.

Much might be claimed, if the world were more patient, for the Celtic heritage which touched Scott, through the far-off days of the race that peopled the territory he belonged to—an element forgotten to-day. That territory had not an unmixed history. The trail of Celt and Teuton were deeply intermingled there. Montgomerie's love of Nature was his distinguishing trait, and his influence passed on to Fergusson and Burns, and none of these was distinct from Celtic influence. Ayrshire and the blood-hint which came from the Grampian fringe in Kincardineshire, were Celtic in their source and their effect. The love of the wild and weird, the sarcasm which marks the Celtic bard with mastery of satire, the power of the still and awful in Nature, have traces of them in this. It is true that in Scott Nature is not a part of him as with Wordsworth. His eye sees the daffodils, but his soul does not dance with them. He sees the river running, but the singing waters do not run through his heart. Scott rather yields to the Scottish habit of textifying when he takes Nature into touch with man. His moralizing is too frequently a tag, almost like a quotation added to a picture in an Academy catalogue. He was without the real subjectiveness of Burns, less open to the "pathetic fallacy," more wrapt in remembrance, and so he missed the popular sovereignty in verse, given without grumbling to his fellow-countryman. "To Scott a suit of armour with a moonbeam falling on it, a ruined abbey with mouldering corbels, black against the sky, a crumbling tower above a sullen stream, were dearer far than anything in earth besides. To Burns, on the other hand, humanity, living, breathing, singing, loving, sorrowing, laughing, were more than all its trappings could ever be."[1]

Scott's soul was in fact the soul of an ancient knight flooded continually with the glamour of the passes and lochs and grey waters of the Border land; the spell of lonely towers clinging to scattered cliffs, the flicker of starlight on the troopers' spears, the gleam of ruddy flames on the faces of minstrels singing of feuds forgotten and deeds of chivalry for woman's sake, and love's sake, and for home—these held

[1] *Literature and Life*—Maclean Watt.

his dreams asleep or waking. And so, for ever, through his heart, like the sea-sob in the shell, the songs of old sadness, the lilt of Yarrow and of Tweed, fitfully came and went until he lay by Tweedside dying. Patriotism was a large element of Sir Walter's religion, and his best work throbs with love of country. And thus in his work the life and poetry of his country finds very full expression.

He came, like Burns, at a time when he was needed in order to keep alive national memory and national utterance. The Borderland had still, within its recesses, men and women on whose lips lived the old rugged ballads of early battle days, croonings of Flodden's grief, when all along the melancholy ridge lay the flower of Scotland's bravest chivalry in swathes like a harvest of death, and loud chantings of reivers and raids, when men rode doomwards laughing, and low soft dirges that had broken out of hearts forlorn by cold hearthstones in smoking ruins, after the foe had left only emptiness behind them. In his day the Highlands were shut off from the Lowlands by the living wall of Gaelic. They lay, still, a strange land to the Southron, the shadow of the year of Charlie, with the grief and suffering of Culloden, like a mist along the glens. He knew, face to face, men who had fought for the Stewarts. He had heard their agony as they remembered what their loyalty had cost them. At Tullibody he had learned, too, from Mr Abercrombie, the father of Sir Ralph, how Rob Roy had carried off his cattle, the shouting gillies driving them on through the passes by Inversnaid, and how the old man had gone himself on a daring visit to the MacGregor's stronghold, and settled the blackmail. In his own father's house in Edinburgh he had heard how Murray of Broughton—who, from being a trusty man at Prince Charlie's table of council, had turned traitor and betrayed Lord Lovat—had come on business repeatedly, muffled and masked, till Mrs Scott's curiosity impelled her to bring in a cup of tea, which Murray drank. But after the visitor had gone, old Mr Scott threw the dish out of the window, saying: "No lip in my house shall touch the cup from which a traitor drank!"

Sir Walter's father was a strict Presbyterian, and often left his papers on his desk to lose himself in the pages of Calderwood's *History* of the dark times of the Church. Burns and Scott are the direct products of John Knox's Reformation

and the romance of the Stewart kings. A little later, and they could not have fulfilled their mission, for the change in Scottish life came like a tide-wave, and the old and passing would have been for ever forgotten.

Scott's education was perfectly unsystematic. He drank at every fountain and at all streams. His romantic nature was deepened and fostered from the beginning. For when only eighteen months old, after a trivial fever, he lost the power of his right leg, and it was considered best to send him to his grandfather's farm at Sandyknowe, on which stands the ancient tower of Smailholme. There he found old stories and songs for his nursery tales, and there he lay and played among the sheep; and the shadow of the ancient fort never left his soul. He said later:

> "While I ape the measure wild
> Of tales that charmed me, yet a child,
> Rude tho' they be, still with the chime
> Return the thoughts of early time. . . .
> Then rise those crags, that mountain tower
> Which charmed my fancy's wakening hour. . . .
> It was a barren scene and wild
> Where naked cliffs were rudely piled. . . .
> Methought that, still, with trump and clang
> The gateway's broken arches rang,
> Methought grim features seamed with scars
> Glared through the windows' rusty bars. . . .
> And ever by the winter hearth
> Old tales I heard of woe or mirth. . . ."

The Eildon Hills, cleft into three by the command of Sir Michael Scott the wizard, the vicinity of Tweed and Dryburgh Abbey—these quickened his thought; and Percy's *Reliques of English Poetry*, read in an old garden under a plane tree, set the blood singing in his heart.

One can understand how true his own description of himself is when he says he was:

> "A rattle-skulled half-lawyer, half-sportsman, through whose head a regiment of horse has been exercising since he was five years old."

On his return to Edinburgh it seemed impossible to educate him by code, and he really drove "through a sea of books like a vessel without pilot or rudder." His tutor was opposed to poetry and plays as being fraught with danger; but the boy discovered a Shakespeare in his mother's room, and

came under the kindly influence of Dr Blacklock, the blind minister and poet, whose generous letter prevented Burns from emigrating to Jamaica, and retained him for his own land. In the house of Professor Adam Fergusson, this boy, with all kinds of quaint knowledge in his brain, saw Burns, who, having been struck by a picture of a dead soldier, asked whose verses were inscribed beneath the plate. But none could tell, except the shy, lame lad.

Next, for imaginative influence, came his introduction to the Highlands, when, as a writer's apprentice, he was sent into the Braes of Perthshire to serve a writ of ejectment on some MacLarens. An escort of a sergeant and six men from Stirling Castle accompanied him. Next an advocate, sharing the life of Parliament House ; then Sheriff of Selkirkshire, lifted above all money cares, his prospects seemed most alluring. But there was the shadow, smaller than a man's hand, on the sky-line all the while. He was already a man of considerable note, having given to the world his wonderful collection of Border ballads and traditionary songs, based on fragments which he had gathered in many a raid among the remote farmhouses and bothies.

But now began his inveiglement with the concerns which were to be so fraught with entangling fate for him and his. An old school-fellow of his named Ballantyne, a printer in Kelso, who had borrowed money from him, asked a further financial favour ; but Scott told him he could not lend him more, though he was willing to take a share of his business as a help to him. Thus began the famous Ballantyne and Company. He was heedless about the bills of the firm, and James Ballantyne was more of a literary devotee than a commercial man. *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, *Marmion*, and *The Lady of the Lake* caught the world as they flowed from his pen. Then the wondrous spell of *Waverley*, and the great series of anonymous novels, brought in thousands of pounds, and Scott, with a Scotsman's love for land, and with the dream of founding a territorial family in the old country of his race, began the building of Abbotsford, transforming a meagre patch of ugly soil into a fair estate, and adding field to field and stone to stone. But at length, like a bolt from the blue, a financial and commercial crisis shook the country ; Constable, the publisher, became involved in the ruin of a London house, and in his fall dragged down

Ballantyne and Company, whelming the dreamer in untold disaster. At first he could not believe it, and while the blow lingered he thought all was safe, and wrote his song *Bonnie Dundee*, under the same impulse, as he said, "which makes the birds sing when the storm has blown over." Alas! the next year blank ruin caught him. He found himself personally liable for £170,000. But honour in his brave heart still stood firm, and he resolved to meet it all with his pen. He sat down in his library, and in six years with his own hand he reduced that £170,000 to £54,000. But the effort broke him. A shattered paralytic the pen fell from his fingers. Sent abroad in a ship provided by Government, he moved about the Mediterranean, vainly searching for new health, that ever fled before him at his coming. Then when he felt that all was over, his heart turned home, and between unconsciousness and delirium he was brought back to Abbotsford to die. No more his books delighted him. In vain he tried to write. The witchery was past.

We see him sitting by a window overlooking the Tweed, asking Lockhart, his son-in-law, to read to him. "What book shall I read?" asked Lockhart. "Ah! need you ask?" replied the magician. "There is but one book now." And he read the fourteenth chapter of John. Or, again, we find him making his six-year-old grandson repeat to him some of the hymns of Isaac Watts. Then at last, in bed now, muttering fragments of Isaiah and Job, and some of the Metrical Psalms, or a verse of the ancient hymn:

> "Stabat mater dolorosa
> Juxta crucem lachrymosa
> Dum pendebat Filius."

Or, again, he wakes to intelligent consciousness, and says to Lockhart:

> "I may have but a minute to speak to you. Be a good man. Be virtuous. Be religious. Be a good man. Nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to lie here."

On the 21st of September, at one o'clock, he breathed his last, with all his family round him:

> "It was a beautiful day, so warm that every window was wide open, and so perfectly still that the sound of all others most delicious to his ear, the gentle ripple of the Tweed over its pebbles, was distinctly heard as we knelt around the bed."

With his insurances and copyrights every penny of the colossal debt in which he had been involved was met, and his dust lies stainless and beyond reproach in Dryburgh Abbey.

He was a true magician. No man ever created in so short a time such immortal characters. He wrote *Guy Mannering* in six weeks, and yet think what a gallery it is, with Dandie Dinmont, Dominie Sampson, Dirk Hatteraick, and Meg Merrilees. They stand and speak to us still as though alive. In *Old Mortality*, the novel of the Covenanters, what pictures of the stern religionists, driven mad for their faith, Balfour of Burleigh, with the broadsword over the Bible in his cave, and the old woman at the mouth of the Pass, who carried the secret of the faithful! In one year he wrote both *Rob Roy* and the *Heart of Midlothian*. Bailie Nicol Jarvie would be enough to make any man remembered.

Like Burns, he made rustic life beautiful. His novels are not of dukes and viscounts only; the peasant's hut, the sorrows, the trials of the noble and the brave, these live upon his page. The peasant is brought into contact with kings, the king is melted by the sorrows of the poor. His strength is in his Scottish pictures, for he knew and he loved his country deeply and well.

Looking through such windows to his soul as we can reach, we find some vivid landmarks.

Great human-heartedness and brotherly sympathy, which is the "true pathos and sublime" of any great life, are strongly outstanding. We see how Tom Purdie, the poacher, became his devoted life-long servant. We are told by Shortreed that "Sir Walter spoke to every man as if they were blood relations. He aye did as the lave did,—never made himself the great man, or took ony airs in the company." What a keynote is that to strike, on such a many-stringed nature! When adversity broke into his house his servants stuck by him. It was not wages, but love that held them. They would not take dismissal; his butler would not go. Some of them served, and won no recompense but serving the man they loved.

It was that gift of sympathy which gave him the insight to paint the Scottish peasantry as he did—as in Cuddie Headrigg, slow-minded, faithful, brave but cautious, slow to kindle, yet, once on fire, blazing unquenchably. You see that in his pictures of the Covenanters in *Old Mortality*—

the true Scots nature. Canniness is only one half of it, zeal that glows white-hot is the other, the zeal that in the Covenant quickened and kindled, blown into flame by the cruel persecution of the time. You find it, too, in the picture of Jeannie Deans, the soul of fearless honour, walking all the way to London to get the Duke of Argyle to plead with the king for her sister's pardon; and in her father Davie Deans, the humble cotter with his heart wide open to his God.

Deeply he touched upon the pathos of home. How the heart is moved by poor wandering Meg Merrilees, as she points to her ruined hut and says:

"Do you see that blackit and broken end of a sheiling?—There my kettle boiled for forty years. There I bore twelve buirdly sons and daughters. Where are they now? Where are the leaves that were on that auld ash tree at Martinmas? The West wind has made it bare, and I am stripped too. . . . Do you see that saugh-tree? It's but a blackened rotten stump now. I've sat under it mony a bonnie summer afternoon when it hung its gay garlands over the popplin' water. I've sat there, and," elevating her voice, "I've held you on my knee, Henry Bertram, and sung ye sangs o' the old Barons and their bluidy wars. It will ne'er be green again, and Meg Merrilees will never sing sangs mair, be they blithe or sad. But ye'll no forget her, and ye'll gar big up the auld wa's for her sake, and let somebody live there that's owre guid to fear them of another world. For, if ever the dead came back among the living, I'll be seen in this glen, mony a nicht after these crazed banes are in the mould."

It comes through his own life. As when he says to Washington Irving:

"When I have been for some time in the rich scenery about Edinburgh, which is like ornamented gardenland, I begin to wish myself back again among my own honest grey hills, and if I did not see the heather at least once a year, I think I should die."

And bravely he clashed it out in ringing verse:

"Breathes there the man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land!
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burn'd,
As home his footsteps he hath turn'd,
From wandering on a foreign strand!
If such there breathe, go, mark him well
For him no Minstrel raptures swell;

High though his titles, proud his name,
Boundless his wealth as wish can claim;
Despite those titles, power, and pelf,
The wretch, concentred all in self,
Living, shall forfeit fair renown,
And, doubly dying, shall go down
To the vile dust, from whence he sprang,
Unwept, unhonour'd, and unsung.

"O Caledonia stern and wild,
Meet nurse for a poetic child!
Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
Land of the mountain and the flood,
Land of my sires! what mortal hand
Can e'er untie the filial band,
That knits me to thy rugged strand!"

And in the wail for Scotland's grief at Flodden, which closes *Marmion*:

"Tradition, legend, tune, and song,
Shall many an age that wail prolong:
Still from the sire the son shall hear
Of the stern strife, and carnage drear,
Of Flodden's fatal field,
Where shiver'd was fair Scotland's spear,
And broken was her shield!"

In his last sad days of wandering in foreign places, seeking, alas! what he had lost in Scotland, his mind went back home. As he went through the chestnut forest near Paestum they heard him repeating *Jock o' Hazeldean*, or when a rocky bit of scenery recalled his tangled thoughts, he stopped and murmured:

"'Tis up the rocky mountain,
And down the mossy glen,
We darena gang a-milking
For Charlie and his men."

Old Edie Ochiltree, the Bluegown Bedesman, spoke his own feelings often — that old wanderer, with strange faces of remembrance looking through his heart, and strange shadows walking among his memories, with religion at the back of them all, that fear of God which made our fathers great, and rich above all price. He had been a soldier, yet, in his old age, quiet Thought walked by him as he wandered up the burnsides, sharing the spells of Nature, solemn, lofty, and true. When it is suggested to Edie

that the stake which he, an aged beggar, has in the country must be but small, he flares up and cries :

"Me no muckle to fight for? Isna there the country to fight for, and the burnsides that I gang daundering beside, and the hearths o' the gudewives that gi'e me my bit bread, and the bits o' weans that come toddlin' to play wi' me when I come about a landward town?"

And how sweetly this old man draws the beauty of adversity from the wallflowers in the ruins of St Ruth :

"We'll be better here," he says. "The air's free and mild, and the savour of the wallflowers, and siccan shrubs as grow on the ruined wa's is far mair refreshing than the damp smell down below yonder. They smell sweetest by night-time, thae flowers, and they're maist aye seen about ruined buildings. Now, Maister Lovel, can ony o' you scholars gi'e a gude reason for that?"

Lovel replied in the negative.

"I am thinking," resumed the beggar, "that they'll be like mony folks' gude gifts, that often seem maist gracious in adversity, or may be it's a parable, to teach us not to slight them that are in the darkness of sin, and the decay of tribulation, since God sends odours to refresh the mirkest hour, and flowers and pleasant bushes to clothe the ruined buildings."

There is a beautiful thought there, hushing and very holy, seeing in the flowers a parable of God.

The power of love's invincibleness, he knew, strong love that seas cannot quench or sunder, that cannot know the mastery of time or death, that cannot be turned back by worlds :

"Over the mountains and under the waves,
Over the fountains, and under the graves,
Under floods that are deepest,
Which Neptune obey,
Over rocks that are steepest
Love will find out the way."

And the pathos of love's parting, the eternalness of the tragedy of the woman's heart left waiting evermore, speaks frequently through his verse.

Devotion and loyalty, fidelity, too, he taught—nowhere, perhaps, so deeply as in the trial scene of Fergus MacIvor, in *Waverley*. With what beautiful pathos he paints the

faithfulness of Evan Dhu, the chief's foster-brother, as he pledges himself that, if only they will pardon the chief, he himself, returning to the Highlands, will bring six of the best of the clan to die in his place. A brutal laugh rang through the court at the absurdity of the proposal. When the laugh subsided, Evan looked sternly around:

"If the Saxon gentlemen are laughing," he said, "because a poor man such as me, thinks my life, or the life of six of my degree, is worth that of Vich Ian Vohr, it's like enough they may be right; but if they laugh because they think I would not keep my word and come back to redeem him, I can tell them they ken neither the heart of a Hielandman, nor the honour of a gentleman."

Scott knew what loyalty to a clan meant, and how true the heart was underneath the plaid. In that pathetic plea himself is pleading for chivalrous fidelity to the honour of the race.

He takes life in his hand and weighs it. He says, in tones of regret:

"We hold our health and our reason on tenure slighter than one would desire, were it in their choice, to hold an Irish cabin."

Yet he sees the value of life's discipline and trials:

"The way is long, my children, long and rough,
The moors are dreary, and the woods are dark,
But he that creeps from cradle on to grave
Unskilled, save in the velvet course of fortune,
Hath missed the discipline of noble hearts."

He sees life a mysterious composite, with peace chasing pain, and sorrow dogging gladness, and the gipsy's spinning song cries:

"Twist ye, twine ye! even so
Mingle shadow of joy and woe,
Hope and fear and peace and strife
In the thread of human life.

"While the mystic twist is spinning
And the infant's life beginning,
Dimly seen thro' twilight bending
Lo! what varied shapes attending;

"Passions wild and follies vain,
Pleasures soon exchanged for pain,
Doubt and jealousy and fear
In the magic dance appear!

"Now they wax and now they dwindle,
Whirling with the whirling spindle,
Twist ye, twine ye! Even so
Mingle human bliss and woe!"

But again he cries, though life be such a drifting thing and guided by uncertain stars:

"Perish wealth and power and pride,
Mortal boons by mortals given,
But let constancy abide—
Constancy's the gift of Heaven."

And then he gives a true gathering-tune that sends a thrill through heart and brain:

"Go! sound the clarion, fill the fife,
To all the sensual world proclaim,
One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without an aim!"

The old throb is there, the cry among the heather, the face to the foe, or to the stars—the thing that makes men cross the stormy seas, or pierce the desert mysteries, or stand up stern-eyed to live or die, though all men lie in apathy.

How he clasps sin and suffering together, and shows the heart with remorse gnawing at it, as in Marmion, haunted by the remembrance of Constance, whom he has wronged. He hears the song sung by Fitz Eustace:

"Where shall the traitor rest,
He, the deceiver,
Who could win maiden's breast,
Ruin and leave her?
In the lost battle,
Borne down by the flying,
Where mingles war's rattle
With groans of the dying,
Eleu loro,
There shall he be lying!

"Her wing shall the eagle flap
O'er the false-hearted,
His warm blood the wolf shall lap
Ere life be parted,
Shame and dishonour sit
By his grave ever;
Blessing shall hallow it
Never, O never."

The knight Marmion sits there listening, thinking, remembering. The song beats on his heart, like a bird's wing on the window of a house of Sleep, and it wakes shame within:

> "He drew his mantle past his face,
> Between it and the band,
> And rested with his head a space
> Reclining on his hand.
> His thoughts I scan not, but I ween
> That could their import have been seen,
> The meanest groom in all the hall,
> That e'er tied courser to a stall,
> Would scarce have wished to be their prey,
> For Lutterward and Fontenaye."

Dark soul, doomed by his own sin, there he sits. Would you have thoughts like his in your heart for a day? And poor Constance, the nun who sinned for his sake, dead, in her beautiful youth, built into a living grave in the nunnery crypt; so sure, behind sin's heels does doom come creeping. How he warns us!

> "Remorse!—she ne'er forsakes us!—
> A bloodhound staunch—she tracks our rapid step
> Through the wild labyrinth of youthful frenzy,
> Unheard perchance, until old age has tamed us,
> Then, in our lair, when Time hath chilled our joints,
> And maimed our hope of combat or of flight,
> We hear her deep-mouth'd bay, announcing all
> Of wrath and woe and punishment that bides us."

He warns the simple. Life is not a walled garden. Evil has not always Cain's mark on its brow. Sin is not "kenspeckle." He says:

> "The deadliest snakes are those which, twined 'mongst flowers,
> Blend their bright colouring with the varied blossoms,
> Their fierce eyes glittering like the spangled dew-drop,
> In all so like what Nature has made harmless,
> That sportive innocence, which dreads no danger
> Is poisoned unawares."

His own honest scorn for knavery speaks through the voice of old Douglas, when Marmion, whose character he has fathomed, in leaving Tantallon, says:

> "'Part we in friendship from your land,
> And, noble Earl, receive my hand.'
>
> "But Douglas round him drew his cloak,
> Folded his arms, and thus he spoke:

"'My manors, halls, and bowers shall still
Be open at my sovereign's will,
To each one whom he lists, howe'er
Unmeet to be the owner's peer.
My castles are my king's alone,
From turret to foundation-stone,
The hand of Douglas is his own,
And never shall, in friendly grasp,
The hand of such as Marmion clasp.'"

Here is something for a knave to live on:

"Not serve two masters! Here's a youth will try it—
Would fain serve God, yet give the devil his due.
Says grace before he does a deed of villainy,
And returns his thanks devoutly when 'tis acted."

Of course, he sees how human nature is so fickle:

"Our counsels waver like the unsteady bark
That reels amid the strife of meeting currents."

Yet the heart has duties, for says he:

"Chance will not do the work. Chance sends the breeze,
But if the pilot slumber at the helm
The very wind that wafts us towards the port
May dash us on the shelves. The steersman's part
Is vigilance, blow it or rough or smooth."

Hypocrisy he dreads, especially in the church:

"I fear the devil worst, when gown and cassock,
Or, in the lack of them, old Calvin's cloak,
Conceals his cloven hoof."

He himself was a gentle preacher of purity. There is not, in all his voluminous writings, one unclean line. As he said:

"I am drawing near the close of my career. I am fast shuffling off the stage. I have been perhaps the most voluminous author of the day, and it is a comfort to me to think that I tried to unsettle no man's faith, to corrupt no man's principle."

He believes in standing up to fight without fear. How many could write and feel thus, as he did, in the terrible year of his wife's death and his financial disaster:

"This is the last day of an eventful year, much evil and some good; but especially the courage to endure what Fortune sends, without becoming a pipe for her fingers to play upon."

It is the spirit of the old Border man in the last ditch, dead-beat and bleeding, but facing it all.

Even in his hurt and stricken heart, "broken in the pitch of pride and nearly winged," he thinks of the poor dumb things that love him. I know no sadder moan than this, when he thinks he will never go back to Abbotsford:

"My dogs will wait for me in vain. . . . Poor things, I must get them kind masters. There may be yet those who, loving me, may love my dog, because it has been mine. . . . I feel my dogs' feet on my knees. . . . I hear them whining, and seeking me everywhere."

Honour—honour above all, next God, is this man's creed. Though an impoverished, embarrassed man he will not doubt. To doubt is to lose the battle. He says:

"I see before me a long, tedious, and dark path, but it leads to stainless reputation. If I die in harness, as is very likely, I shall die with honour. If I achieve my task I shall have the thanks of all concerned, and the approval of my own conscience."

What steadied and upheld him was honour here, as a star of duty, and the certainty of the life beyond. Beside his dead wife the faith in the ungrieved meeting again he clings to, will not surrender for all the world holds. And how you can feel his finger on your wrist when he says:

"Death finds us 'mid our playthings—snatches us
As a cross nurse might do a wayward child."

His words should never be forgotten:

"I could not have slept straight in my coffin, till I had satisfied every claim against me."

A brave, faithful, sympathetic, love-winning, love-deserving man, who fell at the gate of perfect victory, having faced everything, and fought the good fight and kept the faith, his own verse seems to cover him:

"O bold and true, in bonnet blue,
That fear and falsehood never knew,
Whose heart was loyal to his word,
Whose hand was faithful to his sword."

He lived a true gentleman, great, simple-hearted, and he was glad at last to lie down and die, having feared nothing here, fearing not to look with waking eyes on God's face in the morning.

CHAPTER XXX

NINETEENTH CENTURY

While in Burns culminated a whole series of wave-forces, he naturally himself became a new force, whence radiated influences that are living still to-day. Modern Scottish dialect poetry, without doubt, owes its continued life to Burns, in the sense that he established the modern Doric as a vehicle of literary expression. The later day, however, had a large stock of poetic utterance apart from the vernacular, which must be considered also as entitled to a place on the Scottish page.

Time has a habit of sifting a man's work, and if a residue is left, it suffices to keep his name on the recording page. Thomas Campbell, who gave to the English language *The Pleasures of Hope*, *Gertrude of Wyoming*, and *Theodric*, will always be remembered as the writer of the imperishable lyrics, *Ye Mariners of England*, *Hohenlinden*, *The Battle of the Baltic*, *Lochiel's Warning*, *Lord Ullin's Daughter*, and *O'Connor's Child*. The first-named poem was published in 1799, when the poet was not twenty-two. He was in reality a lyrical poet, and his larger works suffer from this virtue. He also suffered in his own day from the fact that too much was expected of him, alike in quantity and quality. His genius was not such as to be prolific of the former, but if leisure were allowed to wait for the impulse of inspiration, the latter was assured. 1777-1844.

The Pleasures of Hope very suitably awoke anticipations in all lovers of poetry. It gave phrases that linger still in our national memory. Everybody knows its opening line:

"'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view,"

while the passage on Poland remains among the classics of English literature:

> "Hope for a season bade the world farewell,
> And Freedom shrieked—as Kosciusko fell."

The poem was an immediate success, and four editions were demanded ere a year was out. In fact, the best tribute to its power was shown by the publishers, who had given the author sixty pounds for the work, giving him, besides, fifty pounds for each new edition of two thousand copies, and allowing him also in 1803 to issue it by subscription in quarto, an enterprise by which he raised almost one thousand pounds. During his visit to the Continent he saw, in 1800, from the ramparts, the cavalry charge by which the French won Ratisbon. The effect of this rattled through the throbbing drum-beat lines of *Hohenlinden*, at which he was not present. It remains a living bit of midnight grapple for the mastery, filled with the crash of charging cavalry, the thunder of artillery, the carnival of death.

His power in quotable lines is felt through all his work. The picture of the savage chief in *Gertrude of Wyoming* is comprehended in a few strokes, as vividly as in a Roman coin, or in a line of Horace:

> "Impassive—fearing but the shame of fear—
> A stoic of the woods—a man without a tear."

Lochiel's Warning has many such phrases that had their origin in wide human experience; proverbial in their force, they have passed into the literature of proverb:

> "'Tis the sunset of life gives me mystical lore,
> And coming events cast their shadows before."

Jeffrey, laced in the tight stays of convention, grumbled at the striking measure of *The Battle of the Baltic*, but no English poem has eclipsed its sense of the on-sweeping majesty of a fleet moving into battle:

> "Of Nelson and the North,
> Sing the glorious day's renown,
> When to battle fierce came forth
> All the might of Denmark's crown,

And her arms along the deep proudly shone ;
By each gun the lighted brand,
In a bold determined hand,
And the Prince of all the land
Led them on.

"Like leviathans afloat,
Lay their bulwarks on the brine ;
While the sign of battle flew
On the lofty British line :
It was ten of April morn by the chime :
As they drifted on their path,
There was silence deep as death ;
And the boldest held his breath
For a time. . . .

"Brave hearts ! to Britain's pride
Once so faithful and so true,
On the deck of fame that died,
With the gallant good Riou ;
Soft sigh the winds of heaven o'er their grave !
While the billow mournful rolls
And the mermaid's song condoles,
Singing glory to the souls
Of the brave."

The same ocean-swing was in *Ye Mariners of England!*

"The spirits of your fathers
Shall start from every wave !
For the deck it was their field of fame,
And ocean was their grave ;
Where Blake and mighty Nelson fell,
Your manly hearts shall glow,
As ye sweep through the deep,
While the stormy winds do blow ;
While the battle rages loud and long,
And the stormy winds do blow.

"Britannia needs no bulwarks,
No towers along the steep ;
Her march is o'er the mountain wave,
Her home is on the deep."

These, with *Hohenlinden*, flutter like some proud banner, writ all over with glorious memories, alongside of such a splendid creation as Tennyson's *Charge of the Light Brigade*. They can only be forgotten with the last heart-beat of the race.

John Wilson, better remembered as "Christopher North," the leader of the Blackwood coterie, was in circumstances very different from men like most of those whom he gathered round him in Edinburgh. Every advantage that money and education could bestow was his heritage. At his property of Elleray in the English Lake District he associated with Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, and De Quincey. Largely as a result of that association, he wrote and published his long poem *The Isle of Palms* in 1812, and four years later *The City of the Plague*. The loss of his means and the initiation of *Blackwood's Magazine* opened as with a double knock the doorway to a notoriety which amounted almost to fame. He wrote too much and too quickly, the "printer's devil" practically holding out his hand for every sheet of copy as it dropped from his pen. To-day has not patience enough to spend an evening in Ambrose's Tavern with the Shepherd and Timothy Tickler, and the rest of them. The din of the *Noctes* gets upon modern nerves; the modern head cannot stand the amount of whisky toddy which only inspired and did not muddle. To-day would be under the table ere the first round was finished. He had a sense of the picturesque, but he was too hurried to set the pictures rightly. What he might have done may be estimated in part by such tender lines as these:

1785-1854.

> "A cloud lay cradled near the setting sun:—
> A gleam of crimson tinged its braided snow:
> Long had I watch'd the glory moving on
> O'er the still radiance of the lake below.
> Tranquil its spirit seem'd, and floated slow!
> Even in its very motion there was rest;
> While every breath of eve that chanced to blow
> Wafted the traveller to the beauteous west."

Wilson's writings has been fitly described by Hallam as "the rush of mighty waters"; but they all rushed past.

His poetical reputation faded before his growing note as a prose writer and as a professor; and in Scotland, to-day the general mind confuses him with the author of the popular *Tales of the Borders*, an *olla podrida* by an unfortunate Border journalist, which at first contained contributions by Sir Theodore Martin, Hugh Miller, "Delta," and Maidment. The danger of contemporary enthusiasms is again pathetically

displayed in the case of Professor Wilson. Gilfillan, in his *Gallery of Literary Portraits*, says :

> "By nature he was Scotland's brightest son, not, perhaps, even excepting Burns; and he, Scott, and Burns, must rank everlastingly together as the first three of her men of genius."

It is safe to assert that no one reads his verse to-day, unless for some special purpose, and though he had a great vogue for a while, his day is entirely over, and his writings are without influence, except to the curious student of literature. Like a comet he dashed through the air of his period into the awaiting stillnesses, and the din of his passing has sunk out of remembrance. Only its record remains.

James Hogg, known as the "Ettrick Shepherd," was a peculiarly Scottish phenomenon. Such as he might almost be considered impossible of repetition. 1770-1835.

Springing from a stock long associated with the hills full of bleating sheep, he was imbued with the spirit of legendary ballad and traditional romance. His eccentricities have been immortalized, so far, at least, as pages of printed matter can go, in the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, which still have a place on the shelves of those who are interested in the literary manifestations of their country. The picture of him there given is of the nature of a caricature rather than of a portrait, and yet a caricature often conveys a vivid impression of the nature of its subject. The page of Christopher North preserves for later generations phases of living character, in which almost you hear the shepherd speak.

Rough and unsophisticated, his over-mastering genius made the society into which he was brought forgive the muscular unconventionalities of his conduct and manner, and overlook the exuberant self-conceit which sprang from his consciousness of power. His personality remains as one of the most interesting in the story of Scottish poetry. His mother's heart was a storehouse of ancient Border memories of raid and foray, weird glamour, witchery, and fairy-lore, which provided him with an ample store of material for his imagination, and a library of historic phantasy unique in his time. Almost as soon as he was able to find his way about he was sent to herd the cattle. Scarce able to read even his Bible, hardly knowing how to form a letter, he was full of poetic material in the knowledge and appreciation of

the mysterious and awful. *The Life and Adventures of Sir William Wallace* and *The Gentle Shepherd* he read, as he himself says, without emotion ; but after 1790, when he began his ten years' service with Laidlaw, the farmer of Blackhouse, he came into contact with books, reading Milton, Thomson, and Pope, who moved his imagination. The great awakening came when one day some one recited *Tam o' Shanter* to him out on the open hillside. Of its author, who had just passed away, Hogg knew nothing, but when to the recital was added the story of the ploughman bard, Hogg's soul trembled into new life of hope and resolve.

His world was practically limited to the farm lads and lasses to whom his songs appealed, and through whom they passed about and beyond the district in which they were composed. The first that was printed was *Donald MacDonald*, which became a great popular favourite. Hogg was always hurt that nobody ever thought of asking by whom it had been written. Indeed, once when unable to resist the temptation to tell a man beside him in some concert that he was the author, he was looked upon as a half-drunk madman.

Having saved some two hundred pounds, he embarked on a farming venture in Harris in 1804, in which he lost his money. In imitation of Scott, he brought out *The Mountain Bard*, a book of ballads, and by this, along with *The Shepherd's Guide*, the sum of three hundred pounds came to his pocket, only to be lost again through an over-ambitious venture.

So he determined he would herd the sheep of Apollo, and in 1810 he came to Edinburgh. *The Forest Minstrel*, a wallet of everything he had still unpublished in the way of verse, *The Spy*, a weekly magazine which ran a whole year, and a variety of other schemes, were not lacking in courage on the part of a Border shepherd. But he was not successful. Others were saying or had said either better things, or the same things in a better way. In 1813, however, he struck the brazen doors of fame, when he published *The Queen's Wake*. His usual luck followed him in this also, for his publisher failed. A third edition, however, had been called for. The book at once unlatched for him the door of friendship with "Christopher North," John Gibson Lockhart, Wordsworth, and Southey—"made him free of that great poetic brotherhood which then illumined England."[1]

[1] Principal Campbell Shairp.

Through Byron's interest, John Murray became Hogg's London publisher. Altrive farmhouse, with a few acres of moorland, was let to him by the Duke of Buccleuch at a nominal figure, and there he remained till he died in 1835. His voluminous prose works suffered from the fact that it was dire necessity that held the ink-pot for him. He wrote also in verse *The Pilgrims of the Sun*; *Madoc of the Moor*, *The Poetic Warrior*, being parodies of Wordsworth, Scott, and others, and *Queen Hynde*. Of all his work, *The Witch of Fife* and *Kilmeny* in *The Queen's Wake*, with two or three of his Jacobite songs, and, above all, his lyrics *The Skylark* and *When the Kye comes Hame*, touch highest achievement. The first-named suffers from its affectedly archaic spelling, but even that cannot smother the genius which pulsates throughout it:

"Quhare haif ye been, ye ill womyne,
These three lang nightis fra hame?
Quhat garris the sweit drap fra yer brow,
Like clotis of the saut sea faem? . . .

"We raide the tod doune on the hill,
The martin on the law;
And we huntyd the houlet out of brethe,
And forcit him doune to fa'."

There is a picture of the evil captain of the carlins' revels, as weird as the heart could wish:

"Then up there raise ane wee wee man,
Fra nethe the moss-gray stane;
His face was wan like the collifloure,
For he nouthir had blude nor bane.

"He set ane reid-pipe til his muthe
And he playit se bonnilye,
Till the gray curlew and the black-cock flew
To listen his melodye.

"It rang se sweit through the grein Lommond
That the nycht-winde lowner blew;
And it soupit along the Loch Leven,
And wakinit the white sea-mew.

"It rang se sweit through the grein Lommond.
Se sweitly butt and se shill,
That the wezilis lap out of their mouldy holis,—
And dancit on the mydnycht hill.

"The corby craw cam gledgin near,
The ern ged veeryng bye;
And the troutis laup out of the Leven Loch,
Charmit with the melodye.

"And aye we dancit on the grein Lommond
Till the dawn on the ocean grew;
Ne wonder I was a weary wycht
Quhan I cam hame to you."

The witchery of Kilmeny is beyond expression, and above criticism:

"Late, late in a gloamin when all was still,
When the fringe was red on the westlin hill,
The wood was sere, the moon i' the wane,
The reek o' the cot hung over the plain,
Like a little wee cloud in the world its lane;
When the ingle lowed with eiry leme,
Late, late in the gloamin Kilmeny came hame.
'Kilmeny, Kilmeny, where have you been?
Lang hae we sought baith holt and dene:
By linn, by ford, and green-wood tree,
Yet you are halesome and fair to see.
Where gat you that joup o' the lily scheen?
That bonny snood o' the birk sae green?
And these roses, the fairest that ever were seen?
Kilmeny, Kilmeny, where have you been?'

"Kilmeny looked up with a lovely grace,
But nae smile was seen on Kilmeny's face;
As still was her look, and as still was her ee
As the stillness that lay on the emerant lea,
Or the mist that sleeps on a waveless sea."

Work like that meant long and lonely dreamings on the hillsides of Ettrick, and many a gossamer fancy moving across his view, entitling him to say, even to the king of the school of chivalry, Sir Walter Scott, "I'm king o' the mountain and fairy school." The eerie underworld of shadowy goblin and wraith, and all the host of elf and fay found in him a master. The Borderer's heart responded wonderfully to the spell of the Highlands. In fact, to him has been attributed, by some, the anonymous *Canadian Boat Song*:

"From the lone sheiling of the misty island
Mountains divide us and a waste of seas."

The songs *Cam' ye by Athol?* and *MacLean's Welcome* are as genuine pieces of inspiration as though they had been written

by some bard with the glow of the actual moment's provocation upon his soul.

But he is best, and unequalled, in his *Skylark*, twenty-four lines of molten melody:

"Bird of the wilderness,
Blithesome and cumberless,
Sweet be thy matin o'er moorland and lea!
Emblem of happiness,
Blest is thy dwelling-place—
O to abide in the desert with thee!
Wild is thy lay and loud,
Far in the downy cloud,
Love gives it energy, love gave it birth.
Where, on thy dewy wing,
Where art thou journeying?
Thy lay is in heaven, thy love is on earth.

"O'er fell and fountain sheen,
O'er moor and mountain green,
O'er the red streamer that heralds the day,
Over the cloudlet dim,
Over the rainbow's rim,
Musical cherub, soar, singing, away!
Then, when the gloaming comes,
Low in the heather blooms
Sweet will thy welcome and bed of love be!
Emblem of happiness,
Blest is thy dwelling-place—
O to abide in the desert with thee!"

Nothing on the same subject has come near its lilt of immediate life. There is in it a poet lying in his plaid on the heather, with the echo of the moor-bird's song ringing through his heart.

When the Kye comes Hame is worth scores of pastorals. The very voice of the quiet places speaks through it:

"Come all ye jolly shepherds
That whistle through the glen,
I'll tell ye of a secret
That courtiers dinna ken:
What is the greatest bliss
That the tongue o' man can name?
'Tis to woo a bonny lassie
When the kye comes hame.
When the kye comes hame,
When the kye comes hame,
'Tween the gloaming and the mirk,
When the kye comes hame.

"'Tis not beneath the coronet,
Nor canopy of state,
'Tis not on couch of velvet
Nor arbour of the great—
'Tis beneath the spreading birk,
In the glen without the name,
Wi' a bonny, bonny lassie
When the kye comes hame."

He is worthy to stand along with Burns in these. In fact, for a piece of verse not in the vernacular, but in pure English, *The Skylark* is a real gem of Scottish lyric utterance.

Allan Cunningham owed his poetic awakening probably to the fact that he remembered how, in his father's house, in his sixth year, he had heard Burns recite *Tam o' Shanter*. A varied life of struggle fell to his lot, till he became Clerk of Works to Chantrey, the famous sculptor. His contributions to Cromek's *Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song* were so noteworthy that they secured for him the friendship of Sir Walter Scott and the Ettrick Shepherd. He attempted a dramatic poem, *Sir Marmaduke Maxwell*, and an epic, *The Maid of Elvar*, in both of which he failed, as was to be expected. He was continually busy with his pen; he edited Burns, and Scottish songs, but his best work is found in his lyrics, which were imbued with the feeling of the old minstrelsy. Especially is this evident in that exquisite fragment:

1784-1842.

"Gane were but the winter cauld,
And gane were but the snaw,
I could sleep in the wild woods,
Where primroses blaw.

"Cauld's the snaw at my head,
And cauld at my feet,
And the finger o' death's at my e'en
Closing them to sleep,

"Let nane tell my father,
Or my mither sae dear;
I'll meet them baith in heaven
At the spring o' the year."

His ballad of exile, *Hame! Hame! Hame!* has already been noticed. It can never be forgotten. He has also written

one of the very best songs of the sea, stirring lines that dash with a full-sail movement, uniquely powerful:

"A wet sheet and a flowing sea,
A wind that follows fast,
And fills the white and rustling sail,
And bends the gallant mast;
And bends the gallant mast, my boys,
While, like the eagle free,
Away the good ship flies, and leaves
Old England on the lea.

"Oh for a soft and gentle wind!
I heard a fair one cry;
But give to me the snoring breeze,
And white waves heaving high;
And white waves heaving high, my boys,
The good ship tight and free—
The world of waters is our home,
And merry men are we."

On the skirt of this group is William Laidlaw, Sir Walter Scott's amanuensis, who is remembered by the sweet simplicity of his song *Lucy's Flitting*: 1780-1845.

"For Lucy had served i' the Glen a' the simmer;
She cam' there afore the bloom cam' on the pea;
An orphan was she, and they had been gude till her;
Sure that was the thing brocht the tear to her ee."

Sir Alexander Boswell of Auchinleck, son of Johnson's biographer, was a dilettante antiquarian, and wrote the humorous songs *Jenny's Bawbee* and *Jenny Dang the Weaver*, with others of topical and local interest, some of which are still remembered and sung. He was killed in a duel with Stuart of Dunearn. 1775-1822.

William Knox, schoolmaster, then farmer, then literary man, was author of *The Lonely Hearth*, *Songs of Israel*, *The Harp of Zion*, and other works. He attracted the notice of Scott and Wilson, but he died in 1825, in his thirty-sixth year, of overstrain, which had provoked dissolute habits. He is remembered by his poem on mortality, which was the favourite of Abraham Lincoln. The verses are little else but the echo of the spirit of Ecclesiastes: 1789-1825.

"'Tis the wink of an eye, 'tis the draught of a breath,
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud—
O why should the spirit of mortal be proud!"

James Montgomery was notable for political sufferings innocently incurred. An Ayrshire man, son of a Moravian minister, he stepped through many varied spheres, till he became editor of the *Sheffield Iris*. It was thus that, being held responsible for the opinions of his paper, he was twice imprisoned, once for publishing a ballad, written by an Irish clergyman, on the fall of the Bastille in 1789.

1771-1854.

His first book of poems, *The Wanderer of Switzerland*, went at once through two editions. *The Edinburgh Review*, in its best manner of truculent severity, prophesied that in less than three years no single soul should ever know the name of the book or anything in it. Within eighteen months the prophecy was answered by a fourth edition from the same press as the *Review* itself, and over twenty editions were exhausted. *The West Indies*, in honour of the abolition of the African slave trade, *The World before the Flood*, *Greenland*, and *The Pelican Island*, were his other works. His verse is of a piously reflective cast, attaining no high altitude, but, especially in shorter moods, it is of a simple, pleasing, and often soul-touching expressiveness. Several of his hymns have an abiding favour in the collections of such writings, and in Christian worship. *For ever with the Lord* and *According to Thy Gracious Word* are assured of such favour while Christian praise endures.

All classes in Scotland have in modern times given poets of some note—policemen, postmen, railwaymen, weavers, shoemakers, tramps, and gipsies. Paisley has been the Scottish Parnassus. It is said that when, at a public dinner of about two hundred people in Paisley, the toast of " Poets and Poetry of Scotland " was drunk, the whole two hundred present rose to reply !

The hapless Tannahill was, of course, the greatest of that town's singers. He has written his name all over the locality. Gleniffer Braes, Stanley Castle, the Wood of Craigielea, the Craigie Linn, and all the little streams and wells about that district breathe his memory. We forget the agony of his nerve-stricken life and his wretched suicide, in the beauty and freshness of his verse. He was little over the border-line of the nineteenth century when, in his thirty-sixth year, he took his own life, and perhaps he belongs really to the preceding generation. Still he sent his cry into the nineteenth century, and we cannot ignore

1774-1810.

his *Gloomy Winter's noo awa'*, or his *Loudon's Bonnie Woods and Braes*, his *Jessie the Flower o' Dunblane*, and countless other lyrics which sometimes, through their artless freedom, are attributed by the common mind to Burns himself.

The story of intellect in Scotland is generally the story of struggle against

> "Envy's frown,
> And poverty's unconquerable bar."

Our poets did not generally play their baby tunes with silver spoons on Dresden china mugs. It was a horn spoon and a brave heart that were most often the drum-stick and the drum of their marching music.

William Tennant, on his crutches, limped from poverty to be teacher of classical and oriental languages at the Institute of Dollar, and thence to the Oriental Chair of St Mary's College in St Andrews. He died at Devongrove, Dollar, in 1848, but he will be remembered by the name, at least, of his poem *Anster Fair*. His picture of "Tammy Little" is brimful of cannie humour: 1784-1848.

> "Wee Tammy Little, honest man!
> I kent the body weel,
> As round the kintra-side he gaed,
> Careerin' wi' his creel.
>
> "He was sae slender and sae wee,
> That aye when blasts did blaw,
> He ballasted himself wi' stanes
> 'Gainst bein' blawn awa'.
>
> "When he did chance within a wood,
> On simmer days to be,
> Aye he was frichted lest the craws
> Should heise him up on hie.
>
> "His wife and he upon ane day
> Did chance to disagree,
> And up she took the bellowses,
> As wild as wife could be.
>
> "She gave ane puff intill his face,
> And made him, like a feather,
> Flee frae the tae side o' the house,
> Resoundin' till the tither!"

William Motherwell, a Glasgow man who became Depute Sheriff-Clerk at Paisley, was intensely interested in the ancient poetry of his country. He published in 1819 *The Harp of Renfrewshire*, and in 1827 *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern*, a collection of ballads of Scotland. He was editor of the *Glasgow Courier* till he died at the early age of thirty-eight, while collecting materials for a *Life* of Tannahill. He gave Hogg assistance with an edition of Robert Burns. He was better as a collector than a creator, and his verses are not esteemed to-day as they once were.

1797-1835.

James Hyslop, who dwelt among his sheep for some time near Ayrs Moss, where Richard Cameron, the Lion of the Covenant, in July 1680, with a brave band of Covenanters, leapt, lion-like, to death, was stirred by the environment to express his feelings in *The Cameronian's Dream*. It was indeed a remarkable circle his life moved through, for he passed from the sheepfold to be a naval schoolmaster, a reporter on *The Times*, master of an academy near London, and then again to be schoolmaster on a man-of-war bound for India under Lord George Spence. While cruising, however, off the Island of St Iago, some of the officers went ashore, and brought on board with them a malignant fever, of which Hyslop died in his twenty-ninth year, one more "inheritor of unfulfilled renown," whose broken promise yet has power to speak of the memories that do not die.

1798-1827.

The poem used to be familiar to a bygone generation :

> "In a dream of the night I was wafted away
> To the muirland of mist where the martyrs lay ;
> Where Cameron's sword and his Bible are seen,
> Engraved on the stone where the heather grows green."

Robert Pollok, whose *Course of Time* is one of the literary wonders of our history, having passed through eighty editions in Scotland, and at least one hundred and sixty editions in America, and the price for which amounted to two thousand five hundred pounds, a sum greater than that which was given for the poems of Sir Walter Scott and Thomas Campbell, and almost as large as was ever paid to any poet in the height of his fame, is now read by almost nobody. Its ten books were written in nineteen months, but the task really cost him

1789-1827.

his life, for within a year he died, worn out by over-study, his frail body consumed by its own fires. A Milton in Scots hodden, he passed like a broken promise, and the wonder is, not that the book is so full of imperfections, but that it is at all what he made it. What he might have become had he lived one hesitates to think of.

Hyslop's name recalls that of Henry Scott Riddell, who also began life herding the cows in summer, with an eye and heart open to the wonder and beauty of Nature and the music of her myriad voices. 1798-1870. All the time he was endeavouring to enrich his mind, gathering, from everywhere around, a rich and full education. Before him, as so often with many a poor Scottish lad, gleamed the pulpit as an outlet to his genius, and when his father died he bade farewell to the crook and plaid, and went to school at Biggar, passing on to the University of Edinburgh, and the friendships of Christopher North and Professor Dunbar. He became minister of Teviothead, but after nine years there he suffered from a nervous breakdown which made it impossible for him to resume his work. The Duke of Buccleuch, however, gave him an annuity, and permission to occupy the cottage which had been built for his manse, where he died in 1870. Some of his work became extremely popular. His *Scotland Yet*,

"Wi' a' the honours three."

was published for the purpose of putting a parapet and railing round the Burns Monument on the Calton Hill, Edinburgh.

"The thistle wags upon the fields,
Where Wallace bore his blade—
That gave her foeman's dearest bluid
To dye her auld grey plaid;
When looking to the lift, my lads,
He sang this doughty glee—
Auld Scotland's right and Scotland's might,
And Scotland's hills for me;—
We'll drink a cup to Scotland yet,
Wi' a' the honours three."

The simple pathos of *The Emigrant's Wish* makes it most heart-touching:

"I wish I were hame to our ain folk,
Our kind and our true-hearted ain folk,
But deep are the howes, and heigh are the knowes,
That keep us awa' frae our ain folk."

It is remarkable how often Pegasus has been but the steed that carried poets to the poorhouse. Prosperity and poetry seldom seem to go together. Especially is this seen in the life of William Thom, the poet of Inverurie. He was a fatherless bairn. He knew what it was to stand in the snow with bare feet, and see shut doors and staring windows. At ten years of age he began his factory life, and about 1830 he went with his family to Dundee, whence he removed to Newtyle near Coupar Angus. In 1837, however, trade disasters in America silenced in one week over six thousand looms in Dundee alone. There was nothing for it but the world under his foot, so with a few articles of merchandise and two shillings in his pocket, he began the precarious life of a tramping pedlar, along with his wife and children. Reduced on the road to the most wretched privation, one night, wet and chill, it was only after repeated supplications that they were able to find shelter in an outhouse. That one night's exposure cost them the life of their youngest child. He begged along the highways as a wandering musician, until in Aberdeen he found work at his loom again. At Inverurie, shortly afterwards, his wife died. And here Thom, having come under the patronage of Mr Gordon of Knockespock, was taken by him and his daughter to London for four months, attracting considerable attention. On a second visit to London his book, *Rhymes and Recollections of a Hand-loom Weaver*, having meanwhile brought his name before the public, he was entertained at a public dinner, over which a Member of Parliament presided, and at which some of the most notable people of the time were present. Dickens, Eliza Cook, John Forster, and other leading people took him into their friendship. From America he received two thousand dollars, and considerable sums were sent also from India and Australia. It came to be a repetition of a greater and better-known tragedy. His money went like water among a crowd of worthless parasites. His habits made him lose caste, and estranged him from those who would have helped him, until at last, like the prodigal everywhere and in all ages, he awoke too late to recognition of the disaster he had dragged upon himself, and turned homewards. He carried upon him the mark of death, and so, through the valley of the black night and darkness of poverty, he sank to his grave

1799-1848.

in Dundee on 9th February 1848, to be honoured, when he was done with life's fitful fever, with a public funeral. I think his *Mitherless Bairn* will keep his name living in the memory of men:

> "When a' ither bairnies are hushed to their hame,
> By aunty, or cousin, or frecky grand-dame:
> Wha stan's last an' lanely, an' naebody carin'?
> 'Tis the puir doited loonie—the mitherless bairn!"

Of the school of Bohemian and erratic bards is William Nicholson, the Galloway poet. His life was wild and lonely as a Druid stone in the moors. Weak eyesight hindered his education at school, and kept him from being employed either among the sheep or at the plough, so he wandered through Galloway for thirty years, an actual minstrel, singing his own ballads. I remember hearing a description of how he would come into the Manse of Balmaclellan, and leaning on his staff with his eyes shut, swing to and fro over the weird incantation of his ballad *Aiken Drum*.[1] During his later days he perambulated the country with his bagpipes, simply as a gaberlunzie, and he died at a dykeside, a sad example of absolute genius fallen to ruin. A quaint story is told in regard to him and his strange habits: 1783-1849.

"A farmer in a remote part of Galloway, one June morning before sunrise was awakened by music; he had been dreaming of heaven, and when he found himself awake he still heard the strains. He looked out, and saw no one, but at the corner of a grass field he saw his cattle, and young colts and fillies, huddled together, and looking intently down into what he knew was an old quarry. He put on his clothes and walked across the field, everything but that strange wild melody still and silent in this 'the sweet hour of prime.' As he got nearer the 'beasts,' the sound grew louder; the colts with their long manes, and the nowt with their wondering stare, took no notice of him, straining their necks forward entranced. There, in the old quarry, the young sun 'glintin'' on his face, and resting on his pack, which had been his pillow, was our Wandering Willie, playing and singing like an angel."

What a picture! When reproved by the prosaic farmer for wasting his health and time the poor fellow said:

"Me and this quarry are lang acquaint, and I've mair pleesure in pipin' to thae daft nowts, than if the best leddies in the land were figurin' away afore me."

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[1] *See* p. 372.

For weirdness of conception, shrewdness, tenderness, humour, work-music, and ghastly grim power, his ballad of *Aiken Drum* stands by itself.

David Macbeth Moir, a Musselburgh physician, who wrote frequently for *Blackwood* under the signature of the Greek letter *Delta*, by which he is still remembered, lives by his reputation won during his own life, and by his humorous sketch *Mansie Wauch*, rather than by his poems, though these were very popular in his day. His *Casa Wappy* seems a bit of inanity now, and his *Legend of Genevieve* is forgotten. There can be no resurrection for them.

1798-1851.

John Imlah, who was born in Aberdeen, became a London piano-tuner, and died in Jamaica, remains in our memory most of all through the words which he wrote to the exquisite old melody:

1799-1846.

"O gin I war' faur the Gadie rins."

The ripple and run of the Highland stream in this air is most charming. In his wanderings about the world, probably, the old ballad lilt of his native country ran through his heart, as the rippling burn runs through the fields at the back of Benachie. And though the words are simple, yet they thoroughly and truly express the atmosphere sacred to music and memory:

"O gin I were where Gadie rins,
Where Gadie rins,—where Gadie rins,
O gin I were where Gadie rins,
By the foot o' Benachie. . . .

"When simmer cleeds the varied scene
Wi' licht o' gowd and leaves o' green,
I fain wad be where aft I've been,
At the foot o' Benachie.

"When Autumn's yellow sheaf is shorn,
And barn-yards stored wi' stooks o' corn,
'Tis blythe to toom the clyack horn,
At the foot o' Benachie.

"When winter winds blaw sharp and shrill,
O'er icy burn and sheeted hill,
The ingle neuk is gleesome still
At the foot o' Benachie.

"Though few to welcome me remain,
Though a' I loved be dead and gane,
'll back, though I should live alane,
To the foot o' Benachie."

The love of Nature, which is so remarkably, since Burns, a grace of our Scottish poets, finds sweet voice in the verse of Hugh Macdonald. At first a block printer, he later drifted into the literary life, becoming sub-editor of the *Glasgow Citizen*. He passed on to the editorship of the *Glasgow Times*, and finally became literary editor of *The Morning Journal*. He was only forty-three when he died from over-work. One of his favourite resting-places was the well on the Braes of Gleniffer, now marked by a monumental fountain with his own exquisite verse carved on it: 1817-1860.

"The bonnie wee well on the breist o' the brae,
Where the hare steals to drink in the gloamin' sae gray,
Where the wild moorlan' birds dip their nebs and tak' wing,
And the lark weets his whistle ere mountin' to sing."

He knew what hardship and toil meant to such a life as his, struggling up out of poverty; but he knew also the secret of the victory over difficulty:

"Of gowd or gear I mauna speak; fause fortune's still my fae;
She's grudg'd me e'en the timmer spoon—the breeks o' hodden grey;
Our kail she aye sends through the reek, and clean we pike the bane;
Yet love makes licht o' poortith at my ain hearthstane."

One does not often think of Thomas Carlyle as one of our poets, yet, though he resided for the larger part of his life in London, he remained the rough-hewn Scot until the end. A recent critic says: "He was the Sage of Chelsea, not of Comely Bank." But he was the Man of Ecclefechan till he died, speaking always his broad mother-tongue. The rattle of it is almost heard through all his writing. He was meant for the church, but literature of a large, deep-visioned, prophet-voiced kind lured and caught him. The historian of the French Revolution, of Oliver Cromwell, of Frederick the Great, he sits firmly in his place as one of the world's greatest producers. All who wish the best information on the subjects he has written of must go to his well with their bucket. He translated Luther's great hymn *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*, and it is the best translation of it. He wrote one little somewhat pessimistic poem: 1795-1881.

"What is hope? A smiling rainbow
Children follow through the wet;
'Tis not here, still yonder, yonder;
Never urchin found it yet.

"What is life? A thawing iceboard,
On a sea with sunny shore;—
Gay we sail; it melts beneath us;
We are sunk, and seen no more.

"What is man? A foolish baby,
Vainly strives, and fights, and frets;
Demanding all, deserving nothing;—
One small grave is what he gets."

We, of course, do not accept this as a true philosophy of life, but it was true enough for Carlyle, when we remember how he shut himself up for a week in search of ultimate truth, and emerged having only discovered that he had a digestion, or the want of it. The discovery troubled him all his life. Indeed, it imparted itself to his domestic affairs, and the record of his life by Froude is to be understood as largely, after all, the life-story of a slow liver and a sore stomach.

1792-1877.

Those who love sweet music of word-weaving with that exquisiteness of vowel-collocations, such as can be had especially in Scots or in Gaelic, will treasure a warm affection for Hew Ainslie, who was born at Dailly, Ayrshire. He was well educated at Ballantrae school and Ayr academy, and got a clerkship in the Register House. But he fell over a hasty marriage into sheer poverty, and in 1822 sailed to New York to try the life of a small farmer. He seemed, however, marked out for failure. Having endeavoured to set up practical socialism, in a settlement on the lines of Robert Owen, at New Harmony, Indiana, its very name became a sarcasm, for discords innumerable broke out into full cry, till the whole experiment was jarred into shatterment. He then floated a brewery, but it was burned immediately upon completion. So, having failed to be successful for himself, he was busied till his death in 1877 at New York superintending works for others. His name will live for the opening lines of his ballad:

"It's dowie in the hint o' hairst,
At the wa-gang o' the swallow,
When the win' grows cauld, and the burns grow bauld,
And the wuds are hingin' yellow."

1789-1834.

The muses seem to have lingered about the dales of Roxburghshire in the eighteenth century. Thomas Pringle should be remembered amongst the others who came from that territory into the pages of Scottish song. His *Scenes of Teviotdale* are marked by distinctive

character and feeling. With his father and brothers he emigrated in 1820 to the Cape of Good Hope, but he was not fitted for a pioneer life, being lame and delicate, so he returned to Britain to fight the world with his pen. He edited several issues of *Friendship's Offering*, and became Secretary to the African Society. He issued a book of *African Sketches*, comprising certain of his own experiences, interspersed with poems. His best lines are those beginning :

> "Afar in the desert I love to ride,
> With the silent Bush-boy alone by my side :
> When the sorrows of life the soul o'er cast,
> And, sick of the present, I turn to the past."

The postman poet, Robert Tennant, is of a different sphere in worldly outlook, but the touch of Nature makes him kin. He began as a hand-loom weaver. The hum of the loom seemed to awaken song within his soul, as it has to so many. He passed on, however, to the postal service, and Nature spoke sweetly to him on his rounds through country lanes. His *Wee Davie Daylicht* is a true lyric.

Charles Mackay, born in Perth, but educated in London, Belgium, and Germany, was a prolific writer and lecturer here and in America. His work, however, has not gripped an abiding place, though one must not forget his ballad of healthy optimism, *There's a Good Time Coming, Boys* : 1814-1889.

> "There's a good time coming, boys,
> A good time coming :
> We may not live to see the day,
> But earth shall glisten in the ray
> Of the good time coming.
> Cannon balls may aid the truth,
> But thought's a weapon stronger,
> We'll win our battle by its aid ;
> Wait a little longer."

Thomas Aird was a man once widely spoken of, who, through his poetic genius, while at Edinburgh University, made the acquaintance of Christopher North, "Delta," and many others in the Scottish literary world of his time. He got into the Blackwood set, and having published a long poem called *The Captive of Fez*, he caught the public eye, and became editor of *The Dumfries* 1802-1876.

Herald and Register, doing a great deal of miscellaneous literary work.

1803-1874. From our childhood most of us have been familiar with the name of Sheriff Henry Glassford Bell, who walks through literature like a romantic monk in a cloister by moonlight, solemnly reciting:

> "I looked far back into other years. And lo! in bright array,
> I saw as in a dream, the form of ages past away."

He unfolds in dignified rhythmic word-pictures the glamour of the story of Mary, Queen of Scots, till her head falls on the scaffold at Fotheringay, and the red blood of earth's loveliest queen dropped to be lapped by the little dog that had whimpered by her side:

> "Lapped by a dog! Go, think of it in silence and alone,
> And weigh against a grain of sand, the glories of a throne!"

1829-1894. 1833-1894. Professor Veitch and Professor Nichol gave their classical tone to Scottish pictures, though not in a way perhaps that appeals to the popular mind.

1809-1895. It seems just the other day that the unique figure of Professor Blackie passed away from Edinburgh streets and Scottish platforms. Educated in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Göttingen, Berlin, and Italy, he studied law, and was called to the Bar. He translated the tragedies of Aeschylus and the *Iliad* of Homer, with *War Songs of the Germans*, *Lays of the Highlands and Islands*, and many other things, while, at the same time, holding forth on Greek and the Greek classics and everything else he could think of, in the University of Edinburgh.

He had command of an ebb and flow rhythm, very strikingly seen in his *Benedicite*:

> "Sun and moon bright,
> Night and moonlight,
> Starry temples azure-floor'd,
> Cloud and rain, and wild winds' madness,
> Sons of God, that shout for gladness,
> Praise ye, praise ye God the Lord!"

To him we owe the initiation of the great movement which culminated in the foundation of Celtic chairs in our universities.

Norman Macleod is still a name to conjure with. He was, indeed, in his time the greatest man in Scotland. His father was minister, first of Campbeltown, then of Campsie, and finally of St Columba's, Glasgow, where his Gaelic preaching drew the heart of the Highlanders towards him. After many changes, Norman became minister of the Barony Parish of Glasgow. His enthusiasms and arduous labours, especially on behalf of the working poor, made him one of the most beloved men anywhere. He was the first editor of *Good Words*, and in the pages of that magazine appear *The Old Lieutenant and his Son*, *The Starling*, *Reminiscences of a Highland Parish* with its touching pictures of life in Morven, *Wee Davie*, and a host of other things. He really worked five years into every year that he lived, and when he died in 1872, aged sixty, it was as though he had suddenly fallen beneath the crushing weight of an accumulation of labours which himself had dragged upon him. The words of Dean Stanley, spoken in Westminster Abbey, truly summarize the secrets of Norman's life, and the striking effect of his death: 1812-1872.

"When, ten days ago, there went up the sound of great lamentation, as of a multitude weeping for a lost chief, in the second greatest city of the empire, when rich and poor of all creeds and opinions followed to his grave the great Scottish pastor, whose good deeds had so endeared him to all who knew him, and whose 'Good Words' had reached thousands who had never seen his face, in homes and lands far away, what was it that shed over the close of that career so peaceful, so cheering a light? It was that he was known to have fought the good fight manfully, that he had finished his course with joy, and had done what in him lay to add to the happiness and goodness of the world."

That is a good working creed for any who desire something on which to build a life of truth and service for God and man.

Pathos, devout courage, and rollicking daft humour were all at his command. The first comes in strikingly in his picture of the barn dance, which, in the middle of its tumbling turmoil, has the power to hush the heart:

"Dance, my children! lads and lasses!
Cut and shuffle, toes and heels!
Piper, roar from every chanter
Hurricanes of Highland reels!

"Make the old barn shake with laughter,
Beat its flooring like a drum,
Batter it with Tullochgorum,
Till the storm without is dumb!

"Sweep in circles like a whirlwind,
Flit across like meteors glancing,
Crack your fingers, shout in gladness,
Think of nothing but of dancing!

"Thus a grey-haired father speaketh,
As he claps his hands and cheers;
Yet his heart is quietly dreaming,
And his eyes are dimmed with tears.

"Well he knows this world of sorrow,
Well he knows this world of sin,
Well he knows the race before them,
What's to lose, and what's to win!

"But he hears a far-off music
Guiding all the stately spheres—
In his father-heart it echoes,
So he claps his hands and cheers."

The star of fearless devotion to duty which he followed has become commonplace to us through the hymn in our books of praise, wherein he cries with encouragement and inspiration:

"Courage, brother! do not stumble,
Though thy path is dark as night;
There's a star to guide the humble:
Trust in God, and do the right."

His mirth was infectious and absolutely spontaneous, and helped him through many a day of interrupted labour. Thus, when he was trying to do work under the stress of constant interruptions, the door bell rang so frequently that at length a companion said: "Surely the devil's in the bell, Norman." "Yes," replied the big-hearted fellow; "and that's why he's called B'elzebub, because he bothers us poor ministers!" It found vent in his ludicrous ballad of *The Nose of Captain Frazer*:

"O! if ye're at Dumbarton Fair,
Gang to the Castle when ye're there,
And see a sicht baith rich and rare—
The nose o' Captain Frazer!

"Unless ye're blin' or unco' glee't,
A mile awa' ye're sure to see't,
And nearer han' a man gangs wi't,
That owns the nose o' Frazer!

"It's great in length, it's great in girth,
It's great in grief, it's great in mirth,
Tho' grown wi' years, 'twas great at birth—
The nose o' Captain Frazer.

"I've heard volcanoes loudly roarin',
And Niagara's waters pourin',
But oh! gin ye had heard the snorin'
Frae the nose o' Captain Frazer!

"To wauken sleepin' congregations,
Or rouse to battle sleepin' nations,
Gae wa' wi' preachin's and orations,
And try the nose o' Frazer!

"Gif French invaders try to lan'
Upon our glorious Britain's stran',
Fear nocht if ships are no at han',
But trust the nose o' Frazer!

"Just crack that cannon owre the shore,
Weel ramm'd wi' snuff: then let it roar
Ae heilan' sneeze; and never more
They'll daur the nose o' Frazer!

"If that great nose is ever deid,
To bury it ye dinna need,
Nae coffin made o' wood or lead,
Could haud the nose o' Frazer!

"But let it stan' itsel', alane,
Erect, like some big druid stane,
That a' the warld may see its bane,
In memory o' Frazer!"

A cultured singer, a lover of his country, a lover of true literature and everything that is beautiful, was Principal Campbell Shairp, of St Andrews. The scholarship and culture of Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Oxford, through which flowed the stream of ancient family traditions, found utterance in him. No man better knew the Highlands in their loneliness and charm, before Rannoch and Morar were pierced by railways. His poem on *The Bush aboon Traquair* will keep his memory green. 1819-1885.

A poet early silenced was Robert Nicoll. Born in the Perthshire village of Auchtergaven, he became editor of *The Leeds Times*; he was only a lad of twenty-three when he died, a victim to consumption. 1814-1837.

Among the poets from Scotland and of Scottish blood

singing, not in the Scots vernacular, but in English verse, there are names that need not be hidden.

Lord Macaulay was of the purest Scottish descent; his blood beat with the clashing music of the Celt. John Ruskin also inherited the mysticism of the same race. These distinguished themselves as writers of nervous prose rather than of verse, yet the power of Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome* gave the language many lines that have become almost proverbial, and above the page of the latter burns a true poetic flame.

1800-1859. 1819-1900.

William Edmonstoune Aytoun, Professor of English literature in Edinburgh University, and son-in-law of Christopher North, followed the law, but could not overtake it. He was another of the men who attached themselves to *Blackwood's Magazine*, and in the page of that very exclusive periodical his best-known work appeared, especially in verse. His *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers* has achieved a secure position as a Scottish classic. He was descended from Sir Robert Aytoun, friend of Drummond of Hawthornden, whose poem was the germ of Burns's *Auld Lang Syne*. His mother was sensitive to romance, and to the poesy of fairy and Jacobite lore, and in these matters the poet was in the truest sense her only son. She treasured as a delightful memory that, as a girl, she had seen Sir Walter Scott in his boyhood. Clever, rather than studious, he was outstanding even at school for the sparkle of his humour. In 1832, when he was only seventeen, his romantic feelings prompted the publication of *Poland, and other Poems*. Passing on to London, he rubbed shoulders with the law, but went to Germany and translated an unpublished version of Goethe's *Faust*. As with Carlyle, the contact with the German life and literature quickened and toned the poet's mind.

1813-1865.

In *Blackwood* also appeared *Blind Old Milton, Hermotimus*, and the twenty-second book of Homer's *Iliad*. His *Bon Gaultier Ballads* drew into companionship with him, and partnership in their fun, Theodore Martin; and by their quaint and whimsical imitations of popular poets rivalled and outstripped *The Rejected Addresses*. The pure fun of these productions was united with such proof of poetic ability that the book is still worthy of its place.

The secret of its strength is explained by Sir Theodore Martin:

"It was precisely the poets whom we most admired that we imitated the most frequently. Let no one parody a poet unless he loves him. He must first be penetrated by his spirit, and have steeped his ear in the music of his verse, before he can reflect these under a humorous aspect with success."

He must, of course, have the absolute genius which suffices to enrich the mere fun of his production.

Through the influence of his mother, his romantic attachment to the Stewarts had become to him "only less sacred than his religious creed." This found untrammelled expression in his *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers*. In them the figures of Montrose and Claverhouse, the unfortunate Prince, and the band of sorrowing exiles fighting in the battles of others, homeless for the sake of their loyalty to the ancient royal line, touch a deeply sympathetic chord in the hearts of all that love the thought of the past. His *Execution of Montrose* is a romantic masterpiece, but perhaps the best, because most free of the tendency to hysteria, is *The Burial March of Dundee*:

"Sound the fife, and cry the slogan—
Let the pibroch shake the air
With its wild triumphal music,
Worthy of the freight we bear.
Let the ancient hills of Scotland
Hear once more the battle-song
Swell within their glens and valleys
As the clansmen march along! . . .

"On the heights of Killiecrankie
Yester-morn our army lay:
Slowly rose the mist in columns
From the river's broken way;
Hoarsely roared the swollen torrent,
And the pass was wrapped in gloom,
When the clansmen rose together
From their lair amidst the broom. . . .
But he raised his hand for silence—
'Soldiers! I have sworn a vow:
Ere the evening-star shall glisten
On Schehallion's lofty brow,
Either we shall rest in triumph,
Or another of the Graemes
Shall have died in battle-harness
For his Country and King James! . . .

Strike! and when the fight is over,
If ye look in vain for me,
Where the dead are lying thickest,
Search for him that was Dundee!' . . .
Soon we heard a challenge-trumpet
Sounding in the pass below,
And the distant tramp of horses,
And the voices of the foe:
Down we crouched amid the bracken,
Till the Lowland ranks drew near,
Panting like the hounds in summer,
When they scent the stately deer.
From the dark defile emerging,
Next we saw the squadrons come,
Leslie's foot and Leven's troopers
Marching to the tuck of drum;
Through the scattered wood of birches;
O'er the broken ground and heath,
Wound the long battalion slowly,
Till they gained the field beneath;
Then we bounded from our covert.—
Judge how looked the Saxons then,
When they saw the rugged mountain
Start to life with armed men! . . .
Horse and man went down like drift-wood
When the floods are black at Yule,
And their carcasses are whirling
In the Garry's deepest pool.
Horse and man went down before us—
Living foe there tarried none
On the field of Killiecrankie,
When that stubborn fight was done!"

It has not the dash, the bitter scorn of clan hate, the sword-edged directness of Iain Lom's Chant of Inverlochy; but it truly reflected the reminiscent regret of the cavalier, the sorrow of the cultured soldier, over the passing of the hero of a memorable campaign. Everything that can be finely said regarding the Stewart episode is to be found in these poems.

His *Bothwell* was not so successful. It is too long. In spirit it is a ballad, but it becomes a long sermon in verse, and wearisome in its monotony.

In 1854 he made his most notable *jeu d'esprit* in his demolition of the spasmodic school founded by Alexander Smith, and including such poets as Dobell and Stanyon Bigg. Of the future immortality of these, George Gilfillan was

prolific in prophecy. Wreaths of immortal fame were assured them. Hamlets on stilts, clothed in gloom and suffering all the pangs of undigested metaphor, which had been stewed in the dishes of Bailey's *Festus* and Goethe's *Faust*, peppered with the dust of Young, and sweetened with Wordsworth, their work was striking enough to seem new and fresh; and the age, on the outlook for a poet, accepted the strange for the strong. Aytoun, in *Blackwood*, imitating Gilfillan's method, wrote a sham review of a tragedy as yet unpublished —*Firmilian*, by Percy Jones. The review took in the reviewers, and Aytoun completed the farce by publishing the tragedy, wherein he hit off to a nicety the manner and style of the popular poets. The satire had in itself much real poetry, but the breath of quiet laughter that blew through it softly extinguished the spasmodic school.

Sir Theodore Martin, who collaborated with Aytoun in the *Bon Gaultier Ballads*, was also a native of Edinburgh, and along with Aytoun translated the ballads of Goethe. He himself became notable for his translations of Horace and Catullus, of Goethe's *Faust*, Dante's *Vita Nuovo*, the *Correggio* and *Aladdin* of the Danish poet Œhlenschläger, the *Poems and Ballads* of Heinrich Heine, and Hertz's *King Rene's Daughter*. 1816-1909.

Alexander Smith, whose work and influence provoked Aytoun's *Firmilian*, was one of the wonders, in a way, of literature, fallen from the happy position of having been praised, worshipped, and read by thousands, to a narrow and ever-decreasing circle even of those who know his name or know his work at all. Beyond question, for every thousand readers forty years ago, he has now but a meagre dozen at most. The son of a lace designer in Kilmarnock, he was removed as a child to Paisley, and thence to Glasgow. Set at first to the same trade as his father, he dreamed other dreams for his life's destiny, for Apollo had tweaked his ear. His first book, *A Life Drama*, published in his twenty-third year, went through two editions in 1853, one in 1854, and a fourth in 1855. Matthew Arnold said he was "a phenomena of a very dubious character," but Clough thought his poems had "something substantive and life-like, immediate and first-hand about them." John Forster noticed them in *The* 1830-1867.

Examiner. Then came his *City Poems*, with a striking address to Glasgow:

> "City! I am true son of thine;
> Ne'er dwelt I where great mornings shine
> Around the bleating pens;
> Ne'er by the rivulets I strayed,
> And ne'er upon my childhood weighed
> The silence of the glens.
> Instead of shores where ocean beats
> I hear the ebb and flow of streets."

Next appeared *Edwin of Deira*, of which a second edition was called for within a few months. This work provoked a charge of plagiarism, from comparison with Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. In this connection he had the unique experience of having *Punch* defending the ill-used poet! The sources of influence are plain enough in his work, which nevertheless has a character of its own, and the impress of distinct and striking genius. Unfortunately, it laid itself open to ridicule, and Aytoun, as we saw, led the van in his *Firmilian* — a *Spasmodic Tragedy*, which did its task only too effectively.

His work is like a deserted mine of jewels. Poetic images lie scattered along his poems like the treasures of wrecked argosies along the sands. He had not, unfortunately for his reputation, that self-criticising faculty of stepping out from one's heart and removing excrescences of style, or whatsoever overloads or overbalances the beauty and compactness, or rightness of the setting of thought, which can only be truly discerned in that conjunct view of one's productions so obtained. Necessarily, therefore, he is a "Tit-Bits-ist," now and again planting his feet on the deep eternal, far beneath the surface of life and thought; now and again drawing up from the depths a rich gem, which he frequently spoils before it is set properly. He pours the metal into the mould at the wrong time, and the bell never rings in perfect tune. It is the error of a young writer, and it is common to all forms of art. In verse it inevitably resulted in the "spasmodic" poesy which became, for a very brief period, a school, with Smith as centre and head. The consequence was seen vividly in his *Life Drama*, a production in no wise dramatic, without any real beginning, middle, or end, yet through every page of which well up rainbow bells of exquisite poetry. Indeed, the work seems to have been

composed as a raft to float these, which he strings upon a very thin and artificial thread of love. He lends himself admirably to excerpt treatment. His work is full of pathetic phrase power, such as :

"A passion has grown up to be a King."

or

"The ghost of one bright hour
Comes from its grave, and stands before me now."

or

"She died like music. . . .
They soothed the dead with love-songs low and sweet,
Songs sung of old, beneath the purple night."

They have a hauntingness which defies dissection, but which clings to the memory and touches the heart.

His poetry is full of sea-music and star-music. There is a sermon in this verse, which tells us how the hearts that live too near the edge of the world's selfish scramblings get something of the world's stains upon them :

"Though the great Ocean's inmost heart be pure,
Yet the salt fringe that daily licks the shore
Is gross with sand."

What a sad summary of the duty of work in life, learned from neglect, is here :

"I gave this beggar Day no alms, this Night
Has seen no work accomplished, planned. . . ."

The following verses display both his weakness and his strength. Its subject—a suicide on a hill by midnight—is not only morbid, but far-fetched. A man was looking for the *outré* when he chose it :

"'Twas late, for as he reached the open roads . . .
The drowsy steeples tolled the hour of One.
. . . Far above his head . . .
God's name was writ in worlds. Awhile he stood,
Silent and throbbing, like a midnight star.
He raised his hands. Alas! 'twas not in prayer—
He long had ceased to pray. 'Father,' he said,
'I wished to loose some music o'er Thy world,
To strike from its firm seat some hoary wrong,
And then to die in Autumn, with the flowers
And leaves and sunshine I had loved so well.
Thou might'st have smoothed my way to some great end,—
But wherefore speak? Thou art the mighty God,
This gleaming wilderness of suns and worlds
In an eternal and triumphant hymn
Chanted by Thee unto Thine own great self.

Wrapt in Thy skies what are my prayers to Thee
My pangs? my tears of blood? They could not move
Thee from the depths of Thine immortal dream.
Thou hast forgotten me, God. Here, therefore, here,
To-night, upon this bleak and cold hillside,
Like a forsaken watchfire will I die,
And as my pale corse fronts the glittering night
It shall reproach Thee before all Thy worlds.'

"His death did not disturb that ancient night,
Scornfullest Night. Over the dead there hung
Great gulfs of silence, blue and strewn with stars,—
No sound, no motion, in the eternal depths."

There is so much that is worthless in the immediate vicinity of his best images and phrases, that the writings of this poet will never be read with pleasure as a whole.

In close contiguity to Smith is that charming and beloved Bohemian, Patrick Proctor Alexander, who died in 1886.

The modern spirit of drift from rigid Calvinistic dogma was represented in verse by the Rev. Walter Chalmers Smith, in whose works, *The Bishop's Walk*, *Olrig Grange*, *Hilda among the Broken Gods*, *Raban*, *Kildrostan*, *North Country Folk*, and *A Heretic*, are voiced the gentle human kindness, the wide sympathy, and genial faith of a man who loved his fellowman as deeply as he loved God, and better than he loved sectarian opinions about either. He always left the world waiting for something better from him, and he just failed to touch the highest in poetry, as he could not shake himself quite free in his poems from his models in Wordsworth and Tennyson. The day of his necessity is past. What he pleaded for has been granted, and so the pleading, with the verse that conveyed it, is too much forgotten. He had the poetic insight into human nature, and the true poetic pity, without the gloom of the psycho-pathological dissecting-table. He handles a soul with clean hands, and his thought has in it windows that open heaven-wards. His work will yet again be turned unto when Scotland needs to think of spiritual liberties.

1824-1908.

Scottish poetry was enriched by the old mystic George Macdonald, so like George Herbert in the feeling of much of his verse. One of the most picturesque of Scottish poets and story-writers, he was born at Huntly, in Aberdeenshire. He was early in his life a wizard, gathering

1824-1905.

the boys round about him at school with the magic of his stories. His *Within and Without*, *A Hidden Life*, and other poems, have given a taste of their own to English verse, like streams of water out of lonely places with the cool tang of the peat within them. The simple direct candour of his face-to-face vision and utterance give him a name entirely his own, not to be forgotten. Can anything be truer than his expression of the secret of the spiritual teaching of pain, as in the following clean-cut gem :

"Few in joy's sweet riot
Able are to listen :
Thou, to make me quiet,
Quenchest the sweet riot,
Tak'st away my diet,
Puttest me in prison—
Quenchest joy's sweet riot,
That the heart may listen."

Here is a parable with some utility in its truth :

"Said the Wind to the Moon, 'I will blow you out.
You stare
In the air
Like a ghost in a chair,
Always looking what I am about,
I hate to be watched ; I will blow you out.'

"The Wind blew hard, and out went the Moon.
So deep,
On a heap
Of clouds, to sleep,
Down lay the Wind, and slumbered soon—
Muttering low, 'I've done for that Moon !'

"He turned in his bed : she was there again !
On high
In the sky,
With her one ghost eye,
The Moon shone white and alive and plain.
Said the Wind—'I will blow you out again.'

"The Wind blew hard, and the Moon grew dim.
'With my sledge
And my wedge
I have knocked off her edge !
If only I blow right fierce and grim,
The creature will soon be dimmer than dim.

"He blew and he blew, and she thinned to a thread.
'One puff
More's enough
To blow her to snuff!
One good puff more where the last was bred,
And glimmer, glimmer, glum will go the thread!'

"He blew a great blast, and the thread was gone;
In the air
Nowhere
Was a moonbeam bare;
Far off and harmless the shy stars shone:
Sure and certain the moon was gone!

"The Wind he took to his revels once more;
On down,
In town,
Like a merry-mad clown,
He leaped and hollowed with whistle and roar,
'What's that?' The glimmering thread once more!

"He flew in a rage—he danced and blew;
But in vain
Was the pain
On his bursting brain;
For still the broader the moon-scrap grew,
The broader he swelled his big cheeks and blew.

"Slowly she grew—till she filled the night,
And shone
On her throne
In the sky alone,
A matchless, wonderful, silvery light
Radiant and lovely, the queen of the night.

"Said the Wind—'What a marvel of power am I!
With my breath,
Good faith!
I blew her to death—
First blew her away right out of the sky—
Then blew her in: what a strength am I!'

"But the Moon she knew nothing about the affair;
For, high
In the sky,
With her one white eye,
Motionless, miles above the air,
She never had heard the great Wind blare."

He has the power of gathering up into a ballad the heart's blood of a tragedy, as in *The Burnie* :

"The water ran doon frae the heich hope-heid,
Wi' a Rin, burnie, rin :
It wimpled, an' waggled, an' sang a screed
O' nonsense, an' wadna' blin,
Wi' its Rin, burnie, rin. . . .

"Ae wee bit mile frae the heich hope-heid,
Wi' a Rin, burnie, rin,
'Mang her yows an' her lambs the herd-lassie stude,
As she loot a tear fa' in,
Wi' a Rin, burnie, rin. . . .

"Twa wee bit miles frae the heich hope-heid,
Wi' a Rin, burnie, rin,
Doon creepit a cowerin' streakie o' reid,
An' meltit awa' within,
Wi' a Rin, burnie, rin.

"Frae the hert o' a youth cam the tricklin' reid
Wi' its Rin, burnie, rin ;
It ran an' ran till it left him deid,
An' syne it dried up i' the win',
An' that burnie nae mair did rin."

A soul like a little child's is the Huntly dreamer's, caught beneath the mystery of the Eternal. Witness his child-song :

"Where did you come from, baby dear?
Out of the everywhere into here. . . .

"Where did you get those eyes so blue?
Out of the sky as I came through.

"Where did you get that little tear?
I found it waiting when I got here."

He has a message of inspiration, a battle-march of power which we ought not to forget :

"They are tired of what is old ;
We will give it voices new ;
For the half hath not been told
Of the Beautiful and True.
Drowsy eyelids shut and sleeping !
Heavy eyes oppressed with weeping !
Flashes through the lashes leaping !

"Ye that have a pleasant voice,
Hither come without delay;
Ye will never have a choice
Like to that ye have to-day.
Round the wide world we will go,
Singing through the frost and snow,
Till the daisies are in blow."

Of David Gray, that poetic foster-son of Keats the dreamily divine, we had, besides what was in *The Luggie*, only a few sprays of promise tost down at our feet. Filled with youthful enthusiasm, the young dreamer fled from Glasgow University to London town in 1859, to fight his way up the hard ascent of the literary life to fame, as Johnson, Savage, and Goldsmith had done before him. His flight was to have been accompanied by Robert Buchanan, but the adventurers got separated, so Gray spent his first night in the city of his dreamings in Hyde Park, in the open air, and in that night death laid his finger upon him, and marked him for his own. This, which he wrote in the hotel at Torquay, just before his last return to die near the Luggie whose praises he had sung, is a fine example of his art, which moved with the touch of Wordsworth and Tennyson on its pulse:

1838-1861.

"Come to me, O my mother, come to me,
Thine own son, slowly dying, far away.
Through the moist ways of the wide ocean blown
By great invisible winds, come stately ships
To this calm bay for quiet anchorage.
They come, they rest awhile, they go away,
But, O my mother, never comest thou.
The snow is round thy dwelling, the white snow,
That cold soft revelation, pure as light,—
And the pine spire is mystically fringed,
Laced with encrusted silver. Here, ah me,
The winter is decrepit, underborn,
A leper, with no power but his disease.
Why am I from thee, mother, far from thee,
Far from the frost-enchantment, and the woods,
Jewelled from bough to bough. . . . O home, my home
O river in the valley of my home,
With mazy winding motion intricate,
Twisting thy deathless music underneath
The polished icework—must I nevermore
Behold thee with familiar eyes, and watch
Thy beauty changing with the changeful day,
Thy beauty constant to the constant change."

It is as representative of his best as anything in *The Luggie.*

His companion in this literary pilgrimage was, as we saw, Robert Buchanan, a poet of power and promise, one of the most versatilely gifted of living writers, who yet fell short of the height he aimed at. He tells us with true heart-touches, how his soul in London went away to the mountain-land; and the roar of life in city streets, and the hum of London town took his thoughts far back to days in Scotland, when he dwelt beside the sea, and held high converse with men 1841-1901.

> "Grown solemn in the silence of the hills."

His mastery of the weird is well displayed in his *Ballad of Judas Iscariot.* There is also an uncommon phase of sympathy in this:

> "When He returns, and finds all sleeping here—
> Some old, some young, some fair, and some not fair,
> Will He stoop down and whisper in each ear
> 'Awaken!' or for pity's sake forbear,—
> Saying, 'How shall I meet their frozen stare
> Of wonder, and their eyes so woebegone?
> How shall I comfort them in their despair,
> If they cry out, "Too late! let us sleep on"'?
>
> "Perchance He will not wake us up, but when
> He sees us look so happy in our rest,
> Will murmur, 'Poor dead women and dead men!
> Dire was their doom, and weary was their quest,
> Wherefore awake them into life again?
> Let them sleep on untroubled—it is best.'"

His *Coruiskeen Sonnets*, *Balder the Beautiful*, and *The Book of Orm*, are filled with mystic light. Extravagance, speculation, and betting, a trinity of fatal fascination, sucked away his money and his mind, and he died in poverty, half-forgotten.

William Black, a Glasgow journalist, was well known to most for his descriptions of Highland scenery in his novels of poetic gamekeepers and sentimental Sheilas. He wrote some pretty verses, but nothing of note, and, though he was dear to excursionists on the West Highland steamers, he has no abiding hold on literature. 1841-1898.

Another poet of promise, early extinguished, was James MacFarlan, whom nobody reads to-day. Son of a wandering Irish hawker, he became entirely a Bohemian profligate, and died in his thirty-first year. 1832-1862.

James Hedderwick, though also a poet, was rather the helper of others who sang, being the means, through the *Glasgow Citizen*, which he edited, of introducing to the notice of the world such men as Alexander Smith, James MacFarlan, David Wingate, William Black, and David Gray.

1814-1897.

Especially telling in the hearts of Scottish poets of the nineteenth century has been the love of little children and the child-life. In this respect, William Miller, who edited *Whistle Binkie*, led the way. A Glasgow man, who was intended for a surgeon, he became a wood-turner. He is the laureate of the nursery, and hardly any child exists that has not heard of *Wee Willie Winkie*:

1810-1872.

"Wee Willie Winkie
Rins through the toun,
Up stairs and doun stairs,
In his nicht-goun.
Tirling at the window,
Crying at the lock,
'Are the weans in their bed,
For it's now ten o'clock?'

"'Hey, Willie Winkie,
Are ye coming ben?
The cat's singing gray thrums
To the sleeping hen,
The dog's spelder'd on the floor,
And disna gie a cheep.
But here's a waukrife laddie
That winna fa' asleep.'"

He is the Teniers of the nursery.

James Smith follows in close with some of his lilts. He was born in Edinburgh, where he was bred a printer, until in middle life he was appointed librarian of the Edinburgh Mechanics' Library. One should almost be inclined to think that he has here and there a touch of autobiography. Allan Ramsay would have liked him.

1824-1887.

The old quietly humorous sarcastic genius of Scottish verse has its representative in William Watt's *Kate Dalrymple*, whose rhythm and music are entirely naïve and spontaneously buoyant:

1792-1859.

"In a wee cot-house far across the muir,
Where the peesweeps, plovers, and whaups cry dreary,
There lived an auld maid for mony lang years,
Wham ne'er a wooer did e'er ca' his dearie.

A lanely lass was Kate Dalrymple,
A thrifty quean was Kate Dalrymple;
Nae music, exceptin' the clear burnie's wimple,
Was heard round the dwelling o' Kate Dalrymple.

"Her face had a smack o' the gruesome and grim,
Whilk did frae the fash o' a' wooers defend her;
Her lang Roman nose nearly met wi' her chin,
That brang folk in min' o' the auld witch o' Endor.
A weagle in her walk had Kate Dalrymple,
A sneevil in her talk had Kate Dalrymple;
And mony a cornelian and cairngorm pimple
Did bleeze on the dun face o' Kate Dalrymple."

No lover came near her. Her path to the peats or the croft was solitary till some one left her a tocher, and the story was reversed. But she tired of them all, remembering an old "wabster" she had formerly thought of, so over she went wooing for herself, and not in vain:

"He flang by his heddles for Kate Dalrymple,
He burnt a' his treddles doun for Kate Dalrymple;
Thou his right e'e doth skellie, and his lang leg doth wimple,
He's up and he's wedded noo wi' Kate Dalrymple."

In James Ballantine we have a sweet singer of simple life and its simple lessons. He learned his philosophy of life in the places where life's battle is going on, in lowly streets and at humble firesides: 1808-1877.

"Confide ye aye in Providence, for Providence is kind,
An' bear ye a' life's changes wi' a calm an' tranquil mind,
Though press'd an' hemm'd on every side, hae faith an' ye'll win through,
For ilka blade o' grass keps its ain drap o' dew."

Alexander Anderson was a phenomenon in literature. Labourer and railway surfaceman, he rose to be librarian in Edinburgh University, reading, understanding, interpreting, and using, with apparent freedom, German, French, and Italian, writing at the same time polished English verse, and a Doric with the old Scots feeling underneath its utterance. Although a bachelor, he had the unique honour of having written one of the most popular ballads of child-life, his *Cuddle Doon*, which has simply nestled into people's heart. The most delightful immortality of all is his; his verse lives on the lips of the lisping child, and moves the sympathies of the grown man and woman. There is in 1845-1909.

the sweetly tender regret of many of his lines something of the old quiet sadness of Dunbar.

One cannot forget that Rudyard Kipling, who by his *Barrack-Room Ballads* and other verse gave voice to the spirit and life of the imperialism of to-day, is, through his mother, of Hebridean descent.

1865.

Neil Munro is the true voice of the mystery and poesy of the Celt, though for the most part in his novels, and seldom finding utterance in verse. Set beside him, the voice of "Fiona Macleod," under which pseudonym William Sharp masqueraded, is felt to ring false by those who truly know the Gaelic heart.

1864.

James Logie Robertson, best known as "Hugh Haliburton," whose verse grips, especially in his imitations of Horace, has done work in the vernacular which, for birr and spirit, has the spirit of past days in it. Take this malediction of the absconding elder:

1847.

"He's aff the kintra at a spang!
He's on the sea—they've tint him!
The warst o' weather wi' him gang!
Gude weather bide ahint him!
O for a rattlin' bauld Scots blast
To follow an' owre-tak' him—
To screed his sails, an' brak' his mast,
An' grup his ship, an' shak' him. . . .

"To lift the watter like a fleece
An' gie him sic a drookin',
Whaur on his growf he groans for grace
But canna pray for pukin'.
Then wash'd owre seas upon a spar,
Wi' seaweeds roun' the head o'm,
Let neither licht o' sun nor star
Shine down upon the greed o'm!

"But let a shark fra oonderneath,
Its jaws wi' hunger tichtenin',
Soom round him, shawin' izzet teeth
At every flash o' lichtnin'!
Till in the end the angry waves
Transport him to a distance,
To herd wi' wolves, an' sterve in caves,
An' fecht for an existence!"

For the national grace of hearty vituperation this is worth studying. His verse is a well of Scottish wisdom, pawky

humour, and sweet poetic beauty undefiled. His *Horace in Homespun* was a revelation. As for translation, which means the actual conveying of the meaning of a poem in one language into the living medium of another, nothing can eclipse his transference of this picture and its meaning from the old Roman's lines into Scots expression :

> " Vides ut alta stet nive candidum
> Soracte."

Hughie calls this his " winter excuse for a dram." It can stand comparison with Allan Ramsay's paraphrase of the same *Ode*.

> " Fra whaur ye hing, my cauldrife friend,
> Your blue neb owre the lowe,
> A snawy nichtcap may be seen
> Upon Benarty's pow ;
> An' snaw upon the auld gean stump,
> Whas' frostit branches hang
> Oot-owre the dyke, abune the pump
> That's gane clean off the fang.
> The pump that half the toun's folk ser'd,
> It winna gie a jaw,
> An' rouch, I ken, sall be your beard
> Until there comes a thaw !
>
> " Come, reenge the ribs, an' let the heat
> Doun to oor tinglin' taes ;
> Clap on a gude Kinaskit peat
> An' let us see a blaze.
> An' since o' watter we are scant
> Fess ben the barley-bree—
> A nebfu' baith we sanna want
> To wet our whistles wi' !
> Noo let the winds o' Winter blaw
> Owre Scotland's hills an' plains,
> It matters nocht to us ava—
> We've simmer in oor veins ! "

Here is a very fine example of his sympathetic and musical expression in *The Growth of the Grain* :

> " The seed was sawn at Candlemas,
> Amang the wind and weet ;
> An' sad at heart the farmer was
> To fling 't amang his feet.

"Then blew the bitter frosty wund:
The last leaf left the tree;
An' daisies to the frozen grund
Laid their wee heads to dee.

"But there's a kindness owre us a';
Heaven sent its blankets doun,
An' 'neath the covering o' the snaw,
The seed it sleepit soun'. . . .

"Allace! it was the wildest bit
O' a' the lanely year:
Save ghaistly mune, or poacher's fit,
Nae visitor cam' near.

"At last the time o' life cam' round
Where it lay sleeping warm,
An' timidly abune the ground
It reached a tiny arm. . . .

"The East sent many a withering blight,
The North sent hail an' rain;
Yet still it twinkled to the light,
And, trembling, rose again. . . .

"And still it braved the wintry blast,
An' tholed the winter scorn;
And April kindness kissed at last
The persevering corn!"

Andrew Lang, whose multitudinous contributions to literature have sprinkled the catalogues of all kinds of writings with his name, deserves to be recorded as a Scottish poet, in virtue of his occasional lyrics, if only, and above all, by the fine verses *Almæ Matres*. There is a feeling in the opening lines as though a ghost were in it. Each touch is the touch of a master limner:

1844-1912.

"St Andrews by the Northern sea,
A haunted town it is to me!
A little city, worn and grey,
The grey North Ocean girds it round:
And o'er the rocks, and up the bay,
The long sea-rollers surge and sound:
And still the thin and biting spray
Drives down the melancholy street,
And still endure, and still decay,
Towers that the salt winds vainly beat.
Ghost-like and shadowy they stand
Dim mirrored in the wet sea-sand."

James Thomson, born at Port Glasgow, was destined to be the Poet of Despair. His father was a drunken sailor, who crept to the grave through thirteen years of paralysis, and his mother was a religious melancholist. The boy was educated at the Royal Caledonian Asylum, and it was intended that he should be an army schoolmaster, but he fell into disgrace, was dismissed from the army, and he went throughout life a creature whose every hour was contaminated by inherited evil tendencies and constitutional miseries. A lawyer's clerk, a mining agent in America, a correspondent during the Carlist War, till, from 1875 onwards, he depended on what he could earn by contributions to a tobacconists' monthly paper, Bradlaugh got his verses into the *National Reformer*, in which his *City of Dreadful Night* appeared. Kingsley, Froude, George Meredith, and especially Philip Bourke Marston, the blind poet, tried to help him, but in vain. He had yielded his soul to the bondage of narcotics and drink, and was a hopeless derelict. He died in University College Hospital, after having burst a blood-vessel in Marston's rooms. His vein is morbid, his every word is dipped in blackest pessimism. He says: 1834-1882.

> "I find no hint throughout the universe
> Of good or ill, of blessing or of curse;
> I find alone, necessity supreme."

His life had no light in it. Even the light that others brought into it he blew out. His pseudonym "Bysshe Vanolis," composed of Shelley's second Christian name, and the name of Novalis, point out his affinities, or at least what he himself thought those to be. The latter taught that life should be poetry realized in practical conduct; and Thomson expressed the same idea, basing it on the teaching of his own poetry. He said:

> "Meanwhile to serve our fellow-prisoners, helping them as we can, is the sanctitude and piety of our miserable existence."

His work is one of the few creations of absolutely pessimistic despair, which is not the result of a pose, but the natural and inevitable product of a life shadowed beyond remede.

1850-1894.

Robert Louis Stevenson, humorous and pathetic, though he is most kindly remembered for his works of prose imaginative utterance, has a lilt that carries with it the very tang of a heart's tears :

"Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I lay me down with a will.

"This be the verse you grave for me :
'Here he lies where he longed to be ;
Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.'"

The Lowden Sabbath Morn has a true touch, with somewhat of the gentle cynicism of Fergusson about it. See how in the pulpit the minister waxes wordy overhead, and the nodding parish serenely takes its Sabbath rest securely in the pews :

"Wi' sappy unction, hoo he burkes
The hopes o' men that trust in works,
Expounds the fau'ts o' ither kirks,
And shaws the best o' them
No muckle better than mere Turks,
When a's confessed o' them.

"Bethankit ! what a bonny creed !
What mair would ony Christian need ?—
The braw words rumm'le ower his heid,
Nor steer the sleeper ;
And in their restin' graves, the deid
Sleep aye the deeper."

The same humour, spontaneous, luminous, and pictorially perfect, is found in *The Scotsman's Return from Abroad.* It has a Burns touch in it :

"The kirk was filled, the door was steeked ;
Up to the pu'pit ance I keeked ;
I was mair pleased than I can tell—
It was the minister himsel' !
Proud, proud was I to see his face,
After sae lang awa' frae grace.
Pleased as I was, I'm no denyin'
Some maitters were not edifyin' ;
For first I fand—an' here was news !—
Mere hymn-books cockin' in the pews—
A humanised abomination,
Unfit for ony congregation.

Syne, while I still was on the tenter,
I scunnered at the new precentor;
I thocht him gesterin' an' cauld—
A sair declension frae the auld.
Syne, as though a' the faith was wreckit,
The prayer was not what I'd expeckit
Himsel', as it appeared to me,
Was no the man he used to be.
But just as I was growing vext
He waled a maist judeecious text,
An', launchin' into his prelections,
Swoopt, wi' a skirl, on a' defections.

"O what a gale was on my speerit
To hear the p'ints o' doctrine clearit,
And a' the horrors o' damnation
Set furth wi' faithfu' ministration!
Nae schauchlin testimony here—
We were a' damned, an' that was clear.
I owned, wi' gratitude an' wonder,
He was a pleisure to sit under."

His verse was a by-product of his busy pen, but some of his pictures, drawn with rare humour, remain with us:

"A mile and a bittock, a mile or twa,
Abune the burn, ayont the law,
Davie and Donal' and Charlie and a',
And the mune was shining clearly.

"Ane gaed hame wi' the ither, and then
The ither gaed hame wi' the ither twa men,
And baith wad return him the service again,
And the mune was shining clearly.

"The clocks were chappin' in hoose and ha',
Eleeven and twal', and ane, and twa,
And the gudeman's face was turned to the wa'—
And the mune was shining clearly.

"A win' gat up frae aff o' the sea,
It blew the stars as clear's could be,
It blew in the e'en o' a' the three,
And the mune was shining clearly."

And thus they talk, in their "Scotch convoy," for ever, in the chilly night air, warm with brotherly affection and toddy.

His ballad of *Ticonderoga*, written beside his dying father, is considered his best effort; but its clan names are wrong, and it is laboured beyond his powers in verse.

He could be specially telling in children's poems. "Leerie

Light-the-lamps" is lingering still in many a memory, like a fairy visitant. This is what Stevenson makes of him:

"My tea is nearly ready and the sun has left the sky;
It's time to take the window to see Leerie going by;
For every night at tea-time and before you take your seat,
With lantern and with ladder he comes posting up the street.

"Now Tom would be a driver, and Maria go to sea,
And my papa's a banker and as rich as he can be;
But I, when I am stronger and can choose what I'm to do,
O Leerie, I'll go round at night, and light the lamps with you!

"For we are very lucky, with a lamp before the door,
And Leerie stops to light it as he lights so many more;
And O! before you hurry by with ladder and with light,
O Leerie, see a little child, and nod to him to-night."

A curious light-and-shadow life was Stevenson's. In his infancy he ran some strange risks, but the strangest was that incurred through the bibulous tendencies of his first nurse, who was accidentally—or shall we say providentially—discovered in a public-house, while her little charge lay "tucked up out of sight on a shelf behind the bar." What a subject for a biographical illustrator!

The Border town of Selkirk had, in "J. B.," as he preferred to sign himself, a poet of the truest order who, having learned through deepest sorrow and loss, the secret of sweetness in the well at the back of human pain, wrote his last words in heart-wrung tears unforgettable:

1832-1904.

"The curtain's falling, and the lights burn low,
So, with God's help, I'm ready now to go.
I've seen life's melodrama, paid the price,
Have known its loves and losses, hopes and fears,
The laughter and the tears,
And now, God knows, I would not see it twice.

"I've crossed life's ocean, faced its blinding foam,
But now heaven whispers, I am nearing home,
And though a storm-tossed hull I reach the shore,
A thing of tattered sheets and broken spars,
Naked against the stars,
I soon shall be at peace for evermore.

"For if again I pass these waters through,
I know the kingdom I am sailing to,
What boots it where I lie?—beneath the sod,
Or down the dark impenetrable deep,
Where way-worn seamen sleep?
All gates are good through which we pass to God.'

That surely touches a note which sets vibrating the deepest human chords of sympathy.

There is a poet who must not be passed by—David Wingate, the collier, who has left a most touching and beautiful child-poem, *John Frost*, which most quaintly enters into the spirit of a little child, and will long keep Wingate's memory green by its combination of pathos and humour: 1828-1892.

"O mither, John Frost cam' yestreen,
And owre a' the garden he's been,
He's on the kail-stocks,
And my twa printed frocks,
That Mary left out on the green
Yestreen,
John Frost fand them oot on the green.

"And he's been on the trees, the auld loon,
And heaps o' broon leaves shooken doon,
He's been fleein' a' nicht,
Frae the dark to the licht,
And missed nae a hoose i' the toun,
The auld loon,—
He's missed nae a hoose i' the toun. . . .

"And my Auntie her e'en couldna close,
For she said her auld bluid he juist froze,
He cam' in b'low the claes,
And he nippit oor taes,
And he maist taen awa' Bobbie's nose,
Puir wee man,
Sure he couldna do wantin' his nose.

"And my Uncle was chitterin' to death,
And John Frost wadna let him get breath,
And the fire wadna heat,
Uncle's twa starvin' feet,
Till the soles o' his socks were burnt baith,
Birsl't broon,
And the reek comin' oot o' them baith."

Roger Quin was grandson of a travelling tinker, who married one of the Faa-Blyths, the gipsies who still have their stronghold at Yetholm, near Kelso. The wandering blood of him broke through all obstacles, and he preferred to sleep under a haystack and wander the world with his flute,

looking Nature in the face and listening to the beating of her heart. Here are one or two of his verses:

"From the moorland and the meadows
To this city of the shadows,
Where I wander old and lonely, comes the call I understand.
In clear, soft tones, enthralling,
It is calling, calling, calling—
'Tis the spirit of the Open from the dear old Border-land.

"Ah! that call, who can gainsay it?
To hear is to obey it;
I must leave the bustling city to the busy city men;
Leave behind its feverish madness,
Its scenes of sordid sadness;
And drink the unpolluted air of Yarrow once again! . . .

"I shall quit them in the morning,
Just slip out without a warning,
Save a hand-clasp to the friend who knows the call that lures me on
In the city's clang and clatter
One old man the less won't matter;
And no one here will say me nay, or care that I am gone.

"Ah me! shall I recapture
The early joyous rapture
Which shook my being's pulses when that scene first met my eye?
Steeped in early Border story
It stretched in radiant glory,
To where the filmy Cheviots hung along the southern sky!

"The trance—the dream is over—
I awake but to discover
The city's rush—the jostling crowds—the din on every hand;
But on my ear soft falling
I can hear the curlews calling,
And I know that soon I'll see them in the dear old Border-land!"

1856. Sir George Douglas, living the quiet life of a country gentleman, cultivates the muses in his Border-land Arcadia, and has recorded also the literature of his country with a gentle tenderness and wise judgment all his own.

1857-1909. Great hopes were hung above John Davidson when his voice was heard in *Fleet Street Eclogues*, and in such verse as his *Ballad of a Nun*, but he passed through bitter gradations into a state of intense misanthropy alien to poetry. Life held nothing for him, and he saw nought elsewhere, when he set off to seek his grave in the wild sea at the last.

A rare soul, of great promise, was lost in Thomas Davidson, who was one of Scotland's "stickit ministers," that is, a clergyman who never received a pastoral charge. Thackeray printed his *Ariadne in Naxos* in *The Cornhill Magazine*. He died before his time, but his life-thoughts, as preserved in Brown's *Life of a Scottish Probationer*, are among the touching things of the heart. 1838-1870.

The voice of the lawyer is heard in the land of verse in George Outram, with his *Legal and Other Lyrics*. His *Annuity* is as deathless as the annuitant seems to have been. Lord Neaves and William John MacQuorn Rankine also wore singing robes under their Court of Session gowns. 1805-1856. 1800-1876. 1820-1872.

Sheriff Nicolson, the dreamy Celt, Skye-man to the innermost core of his being, scholar and philosopher, born out of due time, not suited for the strenuous life of a restless age, might have done so much, yet died having done so little. His early days were full of splendid promise, but then came the dragging disappointments of a briefless barrister, filling up "the caup and trencher" with the proceeds of Encyclopædia articles, and occasional work, to be followed by the living death of a sheriffdom in Wigtoun, where ooze grew over his days. The Gael looked to him for activity in the Celtic chair, but he refused it, regretting afterwards his decision, and then in the Crofters' Commission there was little but a saunter about the Highlands, able to remove almost nothing of the ancient grievances silted into the relations of the landlord and his tenants, so different from those formerly between chief and clansmen. Next the change to Greenock Court, and then broken days in Edinburgh till the end. His work does not do justice to his genius. But his verses on *Skye* touch the real chord of feeling, for they spoke out of his heart's deepest love for the island of his blood: 1827-1893.

"My heart is yearning to thee, O Skye!
Dearest of islands!
There first the sunshine gladdened my eye,
On the sea sparkling;
There doth the dust of my dear ones lie,
In the old graveyard.

"Bright are the golden green fields to me,
Here in the Lowlands;
Sweet sings the mavis in the thorn-tree,
Snowy with fragrance:
But oh, for a breath of the great North Sea,
Girdling the mountains! . . .

"Where the sun sinks beyond Hunish Head,
Swimming in glory,
As he goes down to his ocean bed
Studded with islands,
Flushing the Coolin with royal red,
Would I were sailing!

"Many a hearth round that friendly shore
Giveth warm welcome;
Charms still are there, as in days of yore,
More than of mountains;
But hearths and faces are seen no more,
Once of the brightest. . . .

"Kind were the voices I used to hear
Round such a fireside,
Speaking the mother tongue old and dear,
Making the heart beat
With endless tales of wonder and fear,
Or plaintive singing."

Thomas Tod Stoddart makes the gamut of the muses a salmon ladder, and the whirr of the reel brings the quiet reaches of the Scottish river into his page.

1810-1880.

Sir Noel Paton was more poetic in his illustrations to *The Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers* and the ballad of *The Dowie Dens o' Yarrow* than in his verse, having much more feeling in his brush than in his pen.

1821-1902.

Isa Craig Knox won the prize at the Crystal Palace for an ode on the centenary of Burns, but her work achieved no other notableness in *Duchess Agnes*.

Will H. Ogilvie, returning to his Border country after eleven years in Australia, has written many sweetly rippling lyrics, and a more ambitious long ballad, *Whaup o' the Rede*.

1869.

But few, if any, have touched the rare stop that Charles

Murray has mastered in his *Hamewith.* Andrew Lang truly says :

"In a far-off land Mr Murray retains the sentiment of that forgotten time, and is haunted by the scent of peat and bog myrtle, the sound of old words that now are strange, the poverty that was not the mate of discontent. . . . Poetry more truly Scots than that of Mr Murray is no longer written—was not written even by Mr Stevenson, about 'a' the bonny U.P. Kirks,' for in his verses there was a faint twinkle of the spirit of mockery."

But Lang is not right in calling Murray's medium the "Doric of the Lowlands." It is the peat-reek of the northern glens, from which the Gaelic has not long since faded, that gives the "sough" to his tones. It will be a long while ere this chaste pastoral be eclipsed :

"He cut a sappy sucker from the muckle rodden-tree,
He trimmed it, an' he wet it, an' he thumped it on his knee ;
He never heard the teuchat when the harrow broke her eggs,
He missed the craggit heron nabbin' puddocks in the seggs,
He forgot to hound the collie at the cattle when they strayed,
But you should hae seen the whistle that the wee herd made !

"He wheepled on't at mornin' an' he tweetled on't at nicht,
He puffed his freckled cheeks until his nose sank oot o' sicht,
The kye were late for milkin', when he piped them up the closs,
The kitlins got his supper syne, an' he was beddit boss ;
But he cared na doit nor docken what they did or thocht or said,
There was comfort in the whistle that the wee herd made.

"For lyin' lang o' mornin's he had clawed the caup for weeks,
But noo he had his bonnet on afore the lave had breeks ;
He was whistlin' to the porridge that were hott'rin' on the fire,
He was whistlin' ower the travise to the baillie in the byre ;
Nae a blackbird nor a mavis, that hae pipin' for their trade,
Was a marrow for the whistle that the wee herd made.

"He played a march to battle, it cam' dirling through the mist,
Till the halflin' squared his shou'ders an' made up his mind to 'list ;
He tried a spring for wooers, though he wistna what it meant,
But the kitchen-lass was lauchin' an' he thocht she maybe kent ;
He got ream an' buttered bannocks for the lovin' lilt he played,
Wasna that a cheery whistle that the wee herd made ?

"He blew them rants sae lively, schottisches, reels, an' jigs,
The foalie flang his muckle legs an' capered ower the rigs,
The grey-tailed futt'rat bobbit oot to hear his ain strathspey,
The bawd cam' loupin' through the corn to 'Clean Pease Strae' ;
The feet o' ilka man an' beast gat youkie when he played—
Hae ye ever heard o' whistle like the wee herd made ?

"But the snaw it stopped the herdin' an' the winter brocht him dool,
When in spite o' hacks an' chilblains he was shod again for school;
He couldna sough the catechis nor pipe the rule o' three,
He was keepit in an' lickit, when the ither loons got free;
But he aften played the truant—'twas the only thing he played,
For the maister brunt the whistle that the wee herd made!"

His experiments, in the broad northern tongue, at translations from Virgil and Horace have a straightness that goes right to the quick. It is as terse as Tacitus. Note this from the *Aeneid*, Book III.:

"We first the great God's help implored
An' blessing on our schemes;
The kavils cuist: a feerious thrang cast lots
Syne gaithered roond aboot,
An' wi' a sturdy pointed stang
We bored his ae e'e oot."

The rendering of Horace is Horatian and unsurpassed:

"Kirsty, ye besom! auld an' grey,
Peer Sandy's wrunkled kimmer,
Death's at your elbuck, cease to play
Baith hame an' furth the limmer.

"Ongauns like yours lads weel may fleg
Fae lassies a' thegither;
Tibbie may fling a wanton leg
Would ill set you her mither.

"She Anra's bothy sneck may tirl
An' loup like ony filly;
Love stirs her as the pipers' skirl
Some kiltit Hielan' billie.

"Nane pledge or bring you posies noo;
Auld wives nae trumps set strummin',
For runts like you the Cabrach woo'—
It's time your wheel was bummin'."

William Cuthbertson, in ballad, sonnet, and lay, characteristically dreams his quiet pictures of rural life; and, with a sweet simplicity preserves within his verse, the light of dying days. 1857.

The foregoing pages have shown that Scotland has had a share in the poetic utterance, giving poets worthy of remembrance, in narrative, in romance, in Nature expression, in ballad, and in lyric. Especially in the three last-named

departments has she been powerful in influence upon other literatures than her own. She has not produced a great epic to stand alongside of the epics which are immortal in the remembrance of men, but she has been rich in humanity, in melody, in the weird and pathetic, worthy to claim a place of her own, and to make her children proud of their literary heritage. The vernacular remains in vigour, pith, and with its edge still on it, in Aberdeenshire and Forfarshire, but elsewhere it has lost much of its individuality, and it is questionable, indeed, whether there can ever again be a great poetic utterance in it. But with a reviving sense of nationality there must ensue a quickened and quickening interest in the literary possessions, and a deeper study of the poetic treasures, which belong to our northern race.

APPENDIX I

The following list of tales, songs, and dances, mentioned in the *Complaynt of Scotland*, is of abiding interest and value:—

I.—Tales.

The Canterbury Tales.
Robert the Devil, Duke of Normandy.
The Well of the World's End.
Ferrand, Earl of Flanders.
The Red Etin with the Three Heads.
Perseus and Andromeda.
The Prophecy of Merlin.
The Giants that eat Quick Men.
On Foot by Forth as I could found.
Wallace.
The Bruce.
Hypomedon.
The Three-Footed Dog of Norway.
Hercules and the Hydra.
How the King of Eastmoreland married the King's Daughter of Westmoreland.
Skail Gillenderson.
The Four Sons of Aymon.
The Brig of Mantribil.
Sir Evan, Arthur's Knight.
Rauf Coilzear.
The Siege of Milan.
Gawain and Gologras.
Lancelot du Lac.
Arthur Knight, He rode on Night, with Gilten Spur and Candle Light.
Floremond of Albany.
Sir Walter the Bold Leslie.
The Tale of the Pure Tint.
Clariades and Maliades.
Arthur of Little Britain.
Robin Hood and Little John.
Mandeville.
Young Tamlane.
The Ring of King Robert.
Sir Eger and Sir Grime.
Bevis of Southampton.
The Golden Targe.

The Palace of Honour.
The Tale of Actæon.
Pyramus and Thisbe.
Hero and Leander.
Io.
Jason.
Opheus, King of Portugal.
The Golden Apple.
The Three Weird Sisters.
Daedalus and the Labyrinth.
Midas.

II.—Songs.

Pastance with Good Company.
The Briar binds Me sore.
Still under the Leaves Green.
Cou Thou Me the Rashes Green.
Alice I wyte your Twa Fair Een.
God You, Good Day, Wild Boy.
Lady, help your Prisoner.
King William's Note.
The land nonny no.
The Chapel Walk.
Faith is there none.
Skald Abellis Nou.
The Abirdenis Nou.
Broom, Broom on Hill.
Alone I weep in Great Distress.
Trolly lolly leman, dow.
Bill, will Thou come by a Lute, and belt Thee in St Francis Cord.
The Frog came to the Myl Dur.
The Song of Gilquhiskar.
Right sorely musing in my Mind.
God send the Duke had bidden in France.
All musing of Marvels, amiss have I gone.
Mistress fair, ye will forfair.
O Lusty May with Flora Queen.
O Mine Heart, hey, this is my Song.
The Battle of the Harlaw.
The Huntis of Cheviot.
Shall I go with You to Rumbelow Fair?
Great is my Sorrow.
Turn thee, Sweet Will, to Me.
My Love lying Sick.
Fair Love, lent thou Me thy Mantle? Joy!
The Percy and Montgomery met.
That Day, that Day, that Gentle Day.
My Love is laid upon a Knight.
Alas, that Samyn Sweet Face!

In ane Mirthful Morrow.
My Heart is leavit on the Land.

III.—Dances.

All Christian Men's Dance.
The North of Scotland.
Hunt's up.
The Common Entry.
Long Flat Foot of Garioch.
Robin Hood.
Tom of Linn.
Friars all.
Inverness.
The Loch of Slene.
The Gossips' Dance.
Leaves Green.
Mackay.
The Spade.
The Flail.
The Lambs' Wind.
Soutra.
Come kittle me naked wantonly.
Shake Leg Foot before Gossep.
Rank at the Root.
Baglap and all.
John Armstrong's Dance.
The Almayne Hay.
The Bace of Voragon.
Danger.
The Bee.
The Dead Dance.
The Dance of Kylrynne.
The Vod and the Val.
Shake a Trot.

APPENDIX II.

List of songs and dances mentioned in *Colkelbie's Sow*:

"A maistir swynhird Swanky,
And his cousing Copyn Cull
Fowll of bellis fulfull,
Led the dance and began
Play us *Joly lemmane,*

Sum trottit *Tras and Trenass,*
Sum balterit *The Bass,*
Sum *Perdowy,* sum *Trolly lolly,*
Sum *Cok craw thow quhil day,*
Twysbank and Terway,
Sum *Lincolme,* sum *Lindsay,*
Sum *Joly lemman, dawis it nocht day,*
Sum *Be zon wodsys singis,*
Sum *Late, laite on evinnyngis,*
Sum *Joly Martene with a mok,*
Sum *Lulalow, lute cok,*
Sum bekkit, sum bingit,
Sum crakkit, sum cringit,
Sum movit *Most mak revell.*
Sum *Symon sonis of Quhynfell,*
Sum *Maister Peir de Conzate,*
And vthir sum in consate
At leser drest to dance.
Sum *Ourfute,* sum *Orliance,*
Sum *Rusty bully with a bek,*
And *Every note in vtheris nek,*
Sum vsit the dansis to deme
Of Cipres and Boheme,
Sum the faitis full zarne
Off Portingall and Naverne,
Sum countirfutit the gyss of Spane,
Sum Italy, sum Almane,
Sum noisit Napillis anone,
And vthir sum of Arragone,
Sum *The Cane of Tartary,*
Sum the *Soldane of Surry,*
All his dansis defynd,
Sum *Pretir Johine of grit Ynd,*
Sum as the *Ethiopis vsit,*
Sum futit and sum refusit,
Sum had dansis mony ma,
With all the dansis of Asia;
Sum of Affrickis age,
And principale of Cartage.
Thair pressit in *Perry Pull,*
Full of bellis fulfull,
Maister Myngeis *The Mangeis,*
Maister Tyngeis *La tangeis,*
Maister Totis *La toutis,*
And *Rousty rottis the routis,*
Maister Nykkis *La nakkis*
And Sir Jakkis *La jakkis,*
The *Haryhurlere husty,*
And *Calby the curst custy.*
Mony laddis, mony lownis,
Knowf, knois, kynnis, culrownis,

Curris, kenseis and knavis
Inthrang and dansit in thravis ;
With thame Towis the mowis,
And Hary with the reid howis,
Than all arrayit in a ring
Dansit *My deir derling,*
And all assentit in a sop
To *The vse of Ewrop* ;
That for so much thay beleuit,
That expert and weill preuit
Thay war in the Est warld,
As is heir breuly ourharld.
Thay conclud the vse plane
Of ylandis in occiane,
And of the fermeland of France,
And how the Empriour dois dance
Suesis in Suavia syne,
And als the *Reuir of Ryne,*
Off *Bretane the brod Ile,*
Off *Yrland* and *Argyle,*
Burgone and *Breband,*
Hanyngo and *Holland,*
Flanderis, Friesland, and eik
Brandeburcht and *Broinsweik,*
Dittmer and *Baywer,*
Pruce, Poill and *Pomer,*
Lubwick land and *Lunaburcht,*
Malestrand and *Makilburcht,*
The steidis sevin and sevinty,
And all boindis thame by,
The *Rerall* and *Rusland,*
Sclauia and *Gotland,*
Denmark and *Norroway.*
All their dansis and play. . . .'

APPENDIX III.

Notable Manuscripts referred to in this Book

1. The Auchinleck. — Fourteenth century, presented to the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, by Alexander Boswell, father of the biographer of Johnson.

2. The Asloan.—This manuscript was written by John Asloan in the year 1515. It was the property of the Boswells of Auchinleck, but is now, through a marriage with Miss Boswell in 1882, in the library of Lord Talbot de Malahide, near Dublin. Only about half of it has been preserved from destruction. It was partly copied by George Chalmers, and this transcript is in the Library of the University of Edinburgh, having been bequeathed by David Laing.

3. The Bannatyne.—So named from George Bannatyne, who wrote it in 1568. It now lies in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh.

4. The Maitland.—A collection made by Sir Richard Maitland of Lethington about 1580. It lies in the Pepysian collection, Magdalene College, Cambridge.

5. The Reidpath.—A miscellaneous collection of ancient Scots poems. Of date about 1663, it is in the University Library, Cambridge.

6. The Makculloch.—So named from the fact that it is a book of Latin notes on Philosophy belonging to Magnus Makculloch, who was a student at the University of Louvain in 1477. The person who next owned it had copied down on blank pages of it verses by Dunbar, Henryson, and others, identifying the authors by appending their names to the poems.

7. The Thornton. — Copied chiefly by Robert Thornton, Archdeacon of Bedford in the diocese of Lincoln. He was alive in 1439, when, as Archdeacon, he witnessed a document. It is in the Library of Lincoln Cathedral.

8. The Howard.—So-called, because it has upon it the autograph of William Howard. It was written about 1500, and contains Walter Kennedy's *Passion of Christ*, with some poems of Dunbar.

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